HORRORcade

By RUSS CECCOLA

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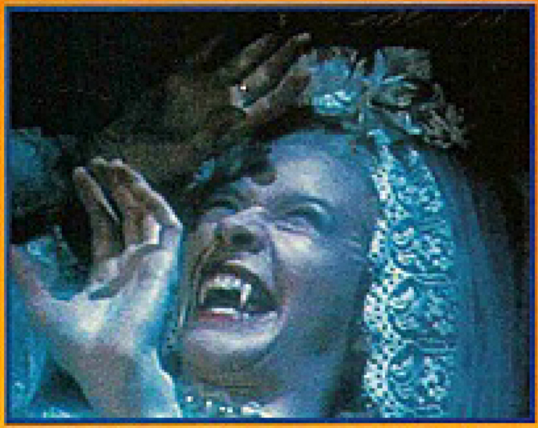
BYTES IN THE NIGHT

Film and paper aren't the only media where fans can find a good scare or gross-out anymore; many horrific experiences are also available on floppy disk, CD or cartridge for computer and video game systems. A fun game may be exactly the kind of break you need after a trip to the multiplex or a few hours under the reading lamp. Unlike movies and books, electronic games let you control the outcome to some extent, and thrive on that interactivity.



The Count is *Unleashed*–along with a few female followers–through Viacom.

On a semiregular basis, I will review the best genre games (rating various aspects on a one-to-five scale) and highlight any special projects. There are already a number of CD-ROM games in development with an intentional slant toward horror, and it won't be too long before our favorite directors and performers make the jump to home entertainment systems to present their latest creations. A major CD horror game called *Phantasmagoria* is already on the way from Sierra On-Line, and Clive Barker himself is working closely with a game company to bring his written nightmares to life. More on these later; for now, let's take a look at our first trilogy of terror.

Dracula Unleashed (Viacom Entertainment) IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Gary Oldman's performance and the creative special FX in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* revived a tired genre and returned vampires to a level of majesty even beyond what Anne Rice had done. *Dracula Unleashed* performs the same facelift on the neckbiting legend for electronic games. This CD-ROM product relies more heavily on spooky scenery, haunting music and sound FX than blood and graphic violence to create its mood. Viacom has set the game up as a mystery that you must solve quickly before one of the game's denizens gets to you. It takes place after the events of Stoker's book; you play the role of Alexander Morris as you search through London over four days' time to discover the secrets behind your brother's death.

The presentation of *Dracula Unleashed* is quite cinematic: You go from place to place and watch video clips shot on stylish sets that reveal more of the story and hint at where to go next. If you move slowly, you're likely to die, but if you're smart, you'll find the right items and defeat the vampires. The segments are not choppy, the performers don't ham it up and it's easy to get drawn into the story. Turn up the volume, turn down the lights and you'll enjoy an experience as tense as any good fright flick.

Bram Stoker's Dracula (Sony/Imagesoft) NES, Super NES, Game Boy, Genesis, Sega CD, Game Gear

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠

While we're on the subject of vampires, we can't ignore Sony/Imagesoft's movie tie-in game. There is a version of the game available for every system, although some pack more punch than others. Each edition is a side-scrolling action/arcade game that roughly follows the plot of the hit film and features many of the movie's characters and the Count's transformations. The Sega CD version has the crispest graphics and several clips from the film.

You control Jonathan Harker as he tries to save his love Mina and defeat the ancient bloodsucker. Although the actions are basically jump and attack/shoot, you may have a hard time with the game at first. The number of life points is limited and there are many ways to get hurt and die. It will take a few tries to get anywhere, but after you do, you'll realize that the enemies' patterns are the same in each game. Plan out your moves and you'll get farther each time. Those who do will see scenery and game levels that recreate sets from the film and provide the perfect setting for much of the action.

Imagesoft's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* game allows you to give a better performance as Jonathan Harker than Keanu Reeves did.

Splatterhouse 3 (Namco) Genesis

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

The *Splatterhouse* saga started in arcades with a video game from Japan that pits what looks like Jason Voorhees against a bunch of gruesome monsters. The game lived up to its name, as it was one of the bloodiest and most violent to ever make it to arcades, and NEC brought it to home markets for the Turbografx-16. Namco later released *Splatterhouse 2* and explained the mask away as a device that the game's hero, Rick, uses to build up power to fight the monsters that have kidnapped his girlfriend Jennifer. *Splatterhouse 3* picks up where the previous game left off; now Rick must use the mask to save his wife Jennifer and their son Kevin.

The appeal of the *Splatterhouse* games is the bloody violence. Its graphics are explicit and gross, but in an over-the-top way. You have a number of weapons like knives, two-by-fours and axes that you can use to fight the monsters. When you destroy one, anything can happen—from a head explosion or decapitation to a spray of blood or a rain of body parts. Appropriately disgusting sound FX accompany each of these scenes.

Splatterhouse 3 adds more play elements in the form of a map, time limits and multiple endings, but it all boils down to cartoon violence taken to the extreme.

HORRORcade

By RUSS CECCOLA

MISSIONS OF MAYHEM

Although this month's selection of games is by no means tame, the fall promises many more exciting products—some gory and bloody, others terrifying and atmospheric. For now, let's take a closer peek at an AD&D game, a CD-based movie-style title and one of the many thrilling products from a company that rules the bulletin boards with its creative software. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession
SSI
IBM PC and compatibles, IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Ravenloft is one of SSI's most popular game worlds for paper-and-pencil players. SSI has been producing AD&D games for a number of years now, so it was bound to happen that they would produce an RPG in that world. The result is an exciting and challenging game set in the Gothic horror settings of Ravenloft, with the look and feel of one of the classier Hammer films. All that's missing is Peter Cushing running around with a hammer and stake.

Even a player who is pure in heart can fall victim to a werewolf in *Ravenloft*.

That image would certainly fit in *Ravenloft*, since the biggest, baddest vampire, Strahd, has stolen a holy amulet that the player must recover. Much of the game is spent on the trail of Strahd; along the way, your party of characters becomes stronger and stronger until they can put up a good fight against him. *Ravenloft*'s game interface is an easy one to control; it includes many simplicities like point-and-click commands, automapping and smooth mouse movement that will make first-time gamers as comfortable as veterans.

Ravenloft is especially notable for its high-resolution 3-D graphics, in which you move from a first-person perspective. The eerie music, large assortment of speech segments and screeching sound FX and many cinematic scenes emphasize the action in a world populated by ghouls, skeletons and other things that go bump in the night.

Ground Zero, Texas
Sony/Imagesoft
Sega CD

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

El Cadron is a quiet Texas border town—the perfect place for an alien invasion, which is exactly what has happened in *Ground Zero, Texas*. You must stop the advance of a group of extraterrestrials disguised as humans and destroy their arsenal of weapons before it's too late. You do this by switching between four camera views of the town that blink when something important is happening. From these views, you can fire at aliens (and watch their green guts go flying) and rescue humans. Eventually, you'll be able to search for clues to the arsenal's location and wipe out all the invaders.

Fifties-style alien invasion action heats up *Ground Zero, Texas*.

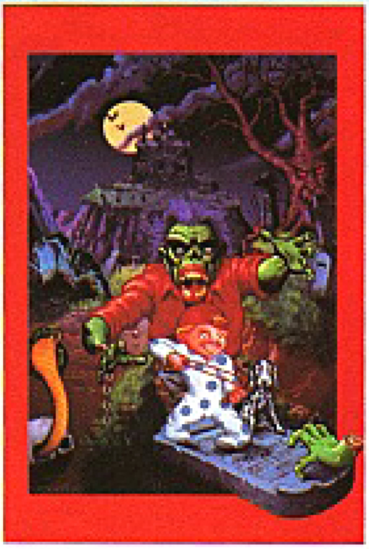
Ground Zero, Texas is notable mostly because it contains over 110 minutes of video and comes on two CDs. There's plenty of speech, sound FX and Hollywood-style sets. Because it contains so much more video than other games, *Ground Zero, Texas* is as close to an interactive movie as it gets (for now). The plot is very simple, but it has random elements so that each game will have new surprises. Dwight H. Little, director of *Marked for Death* and *Halloween 4*, was at the helm of this title, and many Hollywood directors and actors are similarly blazing new frontiers in CD games.

Monster Bash
Apogee Software
IBM PC and compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Monster Bash is one of those games that you show your friends because it's so silly and so much fun. You have to control Johnny Dash, a little boy in polka-dot pajamas, as he takes on Count Chuck, a nefarious fiend who has stolen the world's pets and intends to turn them into zombies. *Monster Bash* is a basic platform game, but the variety of weapons, disgusting creatures, sound FX and over-the-top graphics distinguish it as a fun diversion between major game undertakings. You just run around bashing, bonking and clobbering everything that moves, but it's all in the good cause of saving Johnny's dalmation. Cute, huh?

Monster Bash's scariest image may be the hero's pajamas.



HORRORcade

By RUSS CECCOLA

HI-RES HAUNTS & COMBAT CARNAGE

Halloween is the best time to release horrific games to take advantage of the buying frenzy surrounding the October holiday in recent years. In the past, game companies haven't been too keen on this simple fact; this is the first year in memory where you'll find new titles to whet your appetite after you're done eating all that candy. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Phantasmagoria
Sierra On-Line
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠☠

Phantasmagoria takes a few of the simplest genre elements (a spooky New England house, secrets from the past, a character on the edge of insanity) and uses video scenery, hi-resolution rendered backgrounds and orchestral music to dramatize them in a way never before seen in a CD-ROM game. In the very simple interface, you move the main character, Adrienne, though the rooms and surrounding grounds of a mansion into which she has just moved with her husband. Adrienne wants to learn more about the house's past and its original owner, a peculiar magician named Carno.

Over the course of the game, she learns some terrible secrets and her husband Don grows ever more deranged. Sierra On-Line uses extensive video footage shot over four months to present the story almost like a movie, in which you control the moves of an animated digitized image of the actress who portrays Adrienne. There are also a number of story scenes that play out between the game's chapters. *Phantasmagoria* relies on atmosphere and tension to unsettle you more than outright gore; still, there are definitely a few splattery scenes in store for those who make mistakes or choose to witness the gruesome moments in all their blood-red glory via a game option. *Phantasmagoria* brings real horror to home computers in a fresh, exciting way.

Harvester
Merit Software
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

The tiny town of Harvest is like every other town you see in '50s movies. There's a portly sheriff, a pretty schoolteacher and a number of other stereotypical characters. The difference is that there's a massive lodge just outside town that holds its own terrifying mystery. You're new to Harvest in this game and must investigate a string of murders that ultimately lead to horrific events at the lodge in the exciting and disturbing final act. Unlike *Phantasmagoria* in many ways, *Harvester* uses video and hi-resolution graphics in an almost surreal fashion and concentrates heavily on the gore and sicker elements of horror. For example, the first corpse you find is not much more than the skull and spinal column with some blood and stray skin attached.

Even *Harvester's* game perspective is a bit unsettling. You generally see digitized characters in an offset first-person POV that fills the screen with their (often weird) images. You move through the game's locations in another first-person perspective and ultimately have to fight monsters in the lodge in a side-view arcade game. *Harvester* is without a doubt the goriest and bloodiest game ever. Its designer and lead artist wanted to make the ultimate horror game and definitely know what Fango audiences like, since they read the mag themselves.

Harvester's designers set out to create the ultimate horror game by adding more "bytes" to the format.

The Way of the Warrior is frequently a gruesome one.

Mortal Kombat II
Acclaim
Genesis, Super NES, Sega CD, Game Gear, Game Boy

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Way of the Warrior
Universal Interactive
3DO

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠☠

Mortal Kombat II took over the arcades last summer, replacing only its predecessor in plays. This fall, the game's fans will be able to enjoy the sequel on their home systems in all its gruesome glory. *Mortal Kombat II* features all 12 of the characters from the arcade version and uses the same music and graphics. Those who love to bash their friends in fighting games will enjoy this one's devastating finishing moves, gory graphics that will make parents run to Capitol Hill and unique look and attitude. The Super NES and Genesis games will be the best of the lot until the Sega CD version hits stores.

Way of the Warrior is quite simply the best fighting game available on any system, even better than *Mortal Kombat II*. (However, most people don't have the 3DO CD-based system, so *Mortal Kombat II* is a good second choice.) In *Way of the Warrior*, you control one of the fighters against another of your choice in unique arenas for each character. A tournament mode eventually pits you against secret opponents after you defeat all the regular ones. *Way of the Warrior* has more moves than other fighting games; in fact, each character has a unique fighting style that shapes their actions. The graphics, music and sound FX are stunning; the animations for each character alone would fill a 16-meg game cartridge. The cinematic approach to combat rounds and host of bloody FX should impress the most jaded fighting game fans.

HORROR cade

By RUSS CECCOLA

DEATH DIMENSIONS

Welcome back, game zombies! This month I have a trio of very original, and sometimes gruesome, titles to discuss. Although many game companies turn to sequels and adaptations for inspiration, those who tread the unbeaten path often come up with gems. These three games are all diamonds in the rough. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

With a nod to George Romero, *Isle of the Dead* is one game guaranteed to blow your mind.

Escape from Monster Manor
Electronic Arts
3DO

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Escape from Monster Manor is one of the first games made for the 3DO CD-based system you may have heard about. The system itself is a powerful machine with specialized graphics and sound hardware that produces incredible visuals and audio FX. *Monster Manor* both shows off the system's capabilities and provides hours of entertainment.

Monster Manor is a 3-D haunted house game in which you move through smooth-scrolling, three-dimensional rooms looking for keys, ammo, health boosters and pieces of an ancient talisman. The ammo powers your ghost gun, the only protection against the game's multitude of monsters. The talisman will rid the mansion of its evil inhabitants once it's reassembled. You find a piece on each of the game's 12 levels and then must make your way to that section's exit portal.

Monster Manor's backgrounds are highly realistic, but the monsters themselves look more like cartoons. Game play is fast, so you have to move quickly to keep the enemies at bay and explore the game's rooms. *Monster Manor*'s audio is pretty unsettling; the music creates an eerie atmosphere all by itself, but the moans, screams and other shocking sound FX will rattle your nerves throughout. It only takes a minute to learn how to play, but you'll come back again and again to sample the enhanced excitement of CD gaming.

Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers
Sierra On-Line
IBM PC and compatibles, IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Just one look at the box and you'll be able to gauge the shock level of this game: a man hangs from a noose against a moonlit sky. Sierra On-Line calls this title a "supernatural psycho-thriller," and that sums it up perfectly. You control Gabriel Knight, a New Orleans author and book shop owner. While researching a tome on voodoo, he experiences terrifying nightmares that foresee the future and cause him to investigate the lives of his ancestors. He discovers a mixture of murder, voodoo, a centuries-old curse, cults and other supernatural elements.

Gabriel Knight's plot is excellent, largely because its author, Jane Jensen, is an avid fan of horror and mature-themed comics and has carefully developed the game along those lines. Although not particularly gory, *Gabriel Knight* will frighten many a player with its nightmares, scary sights and dark secrets. The interface is Sierra's standard intuitive adventure game setup, with a fully-painted graphic novel in the package setting up the background story. CD-ROM drive owners have a special treat in store, for that version's dialogue was completely recorded by such famous performers as Tim Curry (as Gabriel), Mark Hamill, Michael Dorn and Efrem Zimbalist Jr.

***Escape from Monster Manor* sports wall-to-wall action.**

Isle of the Dead
Merit Software
IBM PC and compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Imagine a George Romero zombie movie set on a seemingly deserted island. Punch that into a computer and you have *Isle of the Dead*, this month's goriest game. *Isle* combines elements of 3-D action and adventure games for a fun romp. You control Jake Dunbar, the only surviving passenger of a plane crash on the game's titular location. To survive, you must kill scores of zombies, talk with the peaceful natives, save the tribe leader's daughter and foil the plans of a mad scientist. It's B-movie fare all the way.

You see through the eyes of Jake in the 3-D view as you move around the island. Most of the game involves a combat-and-explore mode in which you are ready to dispatch the ghouls that pop up while you look around. Occasionally, you can pick up items or enter a typical adventure game screen where you can do things like "Talk," "Get" or "Use." The game's characters are all drawn as cartoons, making the over-the-top violence and monster extermination comical. The sound effects are minimal, but some speech (like the laughing child zombie) has a chilling effect. *Isle* is nonstop mayhem within the island's mazelike areas, with plenty of action and combat as you discover the island's secrets.

HORROR cade

By RUSS CECCOLA

VIDEO HOUSES OF HORROR

Turn on the power once again, gruesome gamers! This month's trio of titles runs the gamut of horror, from gory, grotesque and exciting, to atmospheric, spooky and weird, to bloody and action-packed. Sink your teeth (or fangs as the case may be) into the ones that suit you best. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Doom
Id Software
IBM PC and compatibles

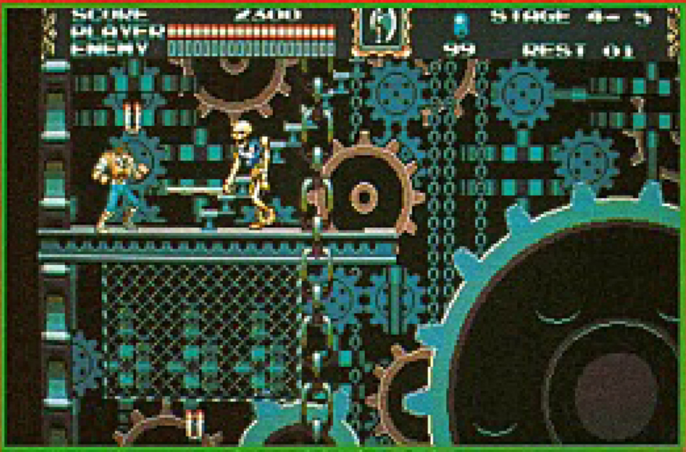
Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Doom comes from the same design group that produced *Wolfenstein 3-D*, the enormously popular computer game in which you sneak through levels of castles firing at Nazis. The setting is completely different in their new game, however. You are a tough space Marine sent to Mars' moon Phobos in order to eliminate the mutant monsters resulting from experiments with interdimensional gateway travel. Eventually, you discover you are on the fringe of hell itself and continue your journey until you've conquered all of its denizens. *Doom* has three major episodes, each of which contain about a dozen levels. These sections become progressively more horrific and their monsters more numerous and stronger as you make your way into hell.

Doom's superior features are many: You move around in a highly detailed 3-D world with a first-person point of view, and fire at the monsters with up to six different weapons. Much of the game play involves the exploration of each level and the discovery of health bonuses, extra ammo and exits, but throughout the entire game you get to blow up monsters as you come upon them. The action is fun and heart-racing; if you choose one of the higher difficulty levels, the excitement never stops and you face even more monsters.

The graphics are stunning and gruesome throughout the game. You really will feel like you're in hell in the last episode, with body parts hanging from the ceiling and rivers of blood flowing beside the pathways. The sound FX are also quite good and intensify the combat, from the screams of the creatures to the rat-a-tat of the chaingun. *Doom* has several neat features like hidden rooms, an overhead map, multiplayer games and modem support, so you'll never tire of the action in and around the domain of demons.

Take care and be handy with your weapons, or you'll meet your *Doom*.



The visual design is the strong point of Konami's *CastleVania: Bloodlines*.

Alone in the Dark
I-Motion
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Alone in the Dark is an older title, but I-Motion recently updated it and put it on a CD-ROM with another game, *Jack in the Dark*, a prequel to the non-horrific, but equally excellent, *Alone in the Dark 2*. In *Alone in the Dark*, you must explore the Derceto mansion, home of the recently deceased owner, in order to find clues to the man's suicide. Derceto is a dwelling straight out of a Lovecraft story; there are spooky monsters with really strange features all over the house. You must prevent the arrival of powerful, evil creatures, much like The Old Ones, through a portal in the depths of Derceto.

The story alone should be enough to attract avid Lovecraft and horror buffs, but the graphics and sound components help to develop the atmosphere. The entire game is in 3-D, and the angles shift in response to your moves in the room. The CD-ROM version also adds hours of dialogue, narration, more music and special FX to sonically unsettle players. Despite the game's age, those who missed it should see why over 100,000 people went crazy over it, while players who know it already will enjoy the sound enhancements and the bonus game.

CastleVania: Bloodlines
Konami
Genesis

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

The *CastleVania* series from Konami have become best sellers due to the easy-to-learn game play, thrilling action and challenging but not too difficult levels. *Bloodlines* continues the story of the House of Belmont and their attempts to rid the world of evil. You choose one of two characters and then run, leap and swing through multiple levels of vampire bats, ravens and Medusa's heads.

The action is quite simplistic, but the monsters, creative atmosphere and level designs keep the game interesting. *Bloodlines* is also a particularly bloody game that somehow earned a GA (General Audiences) from Sega's ratings board. In this case, don't let the rating scare you away!

HORROR Cade

By RUSS CECCOLA

ADVENTURES IN FEAR

Christmas will be long gone by the time you read this, so hopefully Sandy Claws brought you some new games to keep you occupied. But first I must apologize for the inclusion of two games—*Harvester* and *Phantasmagoria*—in my last column. They were scheduled to be released at that time and I had seen versions far along in the development cycle, so it seemed safe to review them then. Unfortunately, because so many companies are including video and other hi-tech elements in their titles, it takes much longer to produce them. You should see both those games on shelves in the first quarter of 1995, and they'll be even better than I expected because of the extra time spent. In the meantime, here are three new PC CD-ROM titles to test your brain and your combat skills. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Doom II: Hell on Earth
id Software
IBM PC and compatibles floppy disk and CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

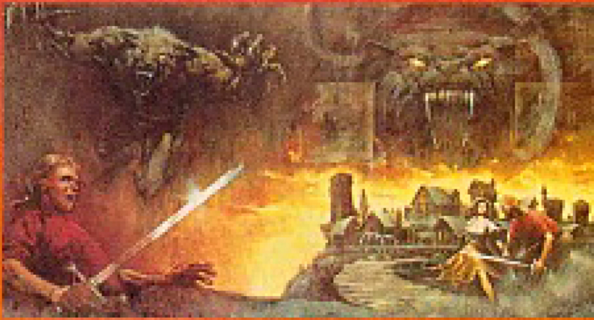
The original *Doom* computer game received wide acclaim from game fans because it had all the right elements—innovative graphics and sound FX, action, excitement and a high replay value. *Doom II* builds upon its predecessor's engine without ruining what was good. You have the same game controls and interface, but one new weapon and a few new, very nasty monsters.

In *Doom*, you had to investigate strange occurrences on another planet that eventually led you to the gates of hell itself. *Doom II* begins with your return to Earth, only for you to find it overrun with monsters. You have to survive 30 levels of increasing difficulty before you encounter the most sinister baddie ever in a *Doom* title.

Doom II is a very difficult game, but you'll get used to the higher demand on your skills after a few levels. You have to move through a 3-D environment with a first-person perspective and blow away anything that moves with an assortment of weapons as you search for the exit. The new monsters are scattered throughout the game, except for the Former Human Commandos (tough guys with chainguns) that appear on almost every level. Other new monsters include the Revenant (a rocket-throwing skeleton) and Arch-Vile (who throws fireballs and brings dead monsters back to life). The new weapon is a double-barreled firearm dubbed the combat shotgun, which takes out some monsters with one pull of the trigger but also has a reload delay.

Doom II is pure violent mayhem. There's not a minute of the game where you're not firing a weapon and, at the same time, trying to avoid attacks by the flurry of monsters. The 3-D graphics are smooth and the levels are intelligently designed so that you can really let yourself slip into the game's world. More adventurous players can hook up with other *Doom* fans over their computer's modem for "Deathmatch" mode, a head-to-head contest of up to four players on any level of the game—much like laser tag. So go get *Doom II* and see what the craze is all about. (If you need another clue to the game's popularity, a *Doom* movie is in the planning stages with many leading action stars vying for the lead.)

If you survived the first, prepare to meet your Doom in the sequel.



Horror fans should be *Ecstatica* over Psygnosis' new game.

Shadow of the Comet
I-Motion
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

I-Motion is the European company responsible for bringing us the popular *Alone in the Dark* games. Now they've veered in another direction with an H.P. Lovecraft adventure that involves the *Call of Cthulhu* license. *Shadow of the Comet* has a very intricate plot and plenty of puzzle-solving and investigation. You control John T. Carter, an astronomer who tries to get to the bottom of strange occurrences surrounding the New England town of Illsmouth in 1910. The unusual events have something to do with Halley's Comet and ancients that once owned the site many years ago.

Shadow has a very cinematic look (close-ups, distant views, etc.), bilingual speech and atmospheric music that add up to an intense, sometimes horrifying game. It continues the fine tradition of using Lovecraft for inspiration.

Ecstatica
Psygnosis
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

The Psygnosis company has long been known for its rather different approach to adventure games, and *Ecstatica* is quite unusual in its own right. You control a traveler who happens upon the deathly quiet town of Tirich. There you find many horrors that all seem to be connected to the wild, horrible dreams of a young girl named Ecstatica. You have to search for a way to rid the town of the evil creatures spawned from her nightmares.

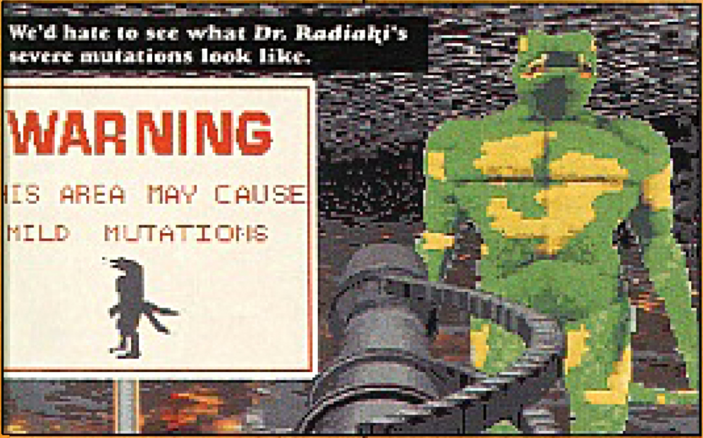
Ecstatica is unusual mostly because of its 3-D ellipsoid graphics. Those players who tried *Alone in the Dark* will recognize this approach: You move a male or female character around with simple keyboard controls, and the view shifts when you enter or leave rooms. The animation is very smooth, and the sound FX and chilling music establish an atmosphere of dread. You can really lose yourself in this adventure if you give it a chance.

HORROR cade

By RUSS CECCOLA

Hi-Tech Creature Hunting

The fine folks at Fango have allowed me to present an extra edition of HorrorCade because there are simply too many genre-related titles coming out over the next few months. Multimedia is a major boon for companies producing horror games, since they can now include video segments, speech and appropriate sound FX—all of which are important for heightening tension and making players jump when a particularly good "gotcha" scene flashes on the computer monitor or TV screen. This month's CD-ROM games certainly live up to that potential, while *Demon's Crest* gets its point across with spooky music and relentless enemies. Before my fingers freeze to the keyboard from the cold winter, let's see some bloody animations! (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)



We'd hate to see what *Dr. Radiaki's* severe mutations look like.

Creature Shock
Virgin Games
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

The basic premise of *Aliens* is one of the most oft-imitated science fiction themes in electronic games. With *Creature Shock*, this approach actually works. You control a marine sent to rescue the survivors, if any, of the spaceship *Amazon*, sent off to Saturn to investigate a new home for mankind; along the way, the *Amazon* was captured by a living asteroid. After a throw-away shoot-'em-up with cool rock music playing in the background, you land on the asteroid and must explore its ancient, organic innards. As you make your way through the corridors, which appear to be blood vessels and organs, various gruesome, terrifying monsters pop out and attack you. The object of the game is to survive these assaults, make it to the *Amazon* and then an alien base and ultimately to confront the evil presence on the outskirts of the galaxy.

Creature Shock's game play is very simple. The only choices you have to make are when you change direction in the asteroid and planet base and where to aim your laser blasts to destroy the aliens. There are a variety of monsters that resemble giant bugs out of H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, each with an Achilles heel. The visuals are amazing, since they are all completely rendered in 3-D from powerful graphics workstations. The atmosphere is unsettling, because you never know when the monsters will appear, and, when they do, they're so gruesome you want to get rid of them fast. The cinematics also contribute to the terror: When a giant silkworm grabs you by the head and pulls you up, you see the floor beneath you slip away and, eventually, the creature's open maw. Don't play this one alone at home or you'll be looking under the bed all night for the source of those strange rustling noises.

When battling dragons and other fiends in *Demon's Crest*, it's best to fight fire with fire.

Demon's Crest
Capcom
Super NES

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Many games try to use flashy box art to disguise an otherwise terrible product; *Demon's Crest* does the opposite. The beautiful cover by Julie Bell represents the quality of graphics and game play you'll find inside. You control a demon known as Firebrand as he searches for six stones that together make up the Demon's Crest, a powerful magical item. Firebrand can morph into six different forms in his quest. The scrolling graphics are stunning and colorful, even if they tend to be dark and moody. The music keeps the game tense and exciting and changes as you progress through even more difficult and sulphurous levels. This is best played in the dark on a large TV screen with the volume turned up full blast.

The Fortress of Dr. Radiaki
Merit Software
IBM PC and compatibles floppy disk and CD-ROM

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Although you really should purchase this on CD-ROM to get the extra levels, voices and other perks, those who have only a floppy disk drive on their computer will enjoy that version just the same. *Dr. Radiaki* is a funny take on the *Doom/Doom II* game styles that takes place entirely inside the fortress of a madman who sends ninjas, toaster-head robots and other assorted laughable creatures your way. *Dr. Radiaki* has many challenging levels as you try to work your way up through the access tubes to the good Dr.'s lair, but it's mostly pure camp and great fun. It's not by accident that the evil weirdo's name is Japanese—*Dr. Radiaki* is the electronic equivalent of an Asian action flick.

HORRORcade

By RUSS CECCOLA

GAMES OF DARK MAGIC

Games offer all kinds of alternate realities. This month, we'll look at a trio that take the player into worlds based on movies, comic books and true 3-D. There's a steady supply of horror games coming out due to increased demand for the genre, but that also means there will be some mediocre or terrible product to watch out for too. Just to whet your appetite, two games based on Clive Barker's work are on the way, and a *Puppet Master* CD-ROM tie-in may appear later this year. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

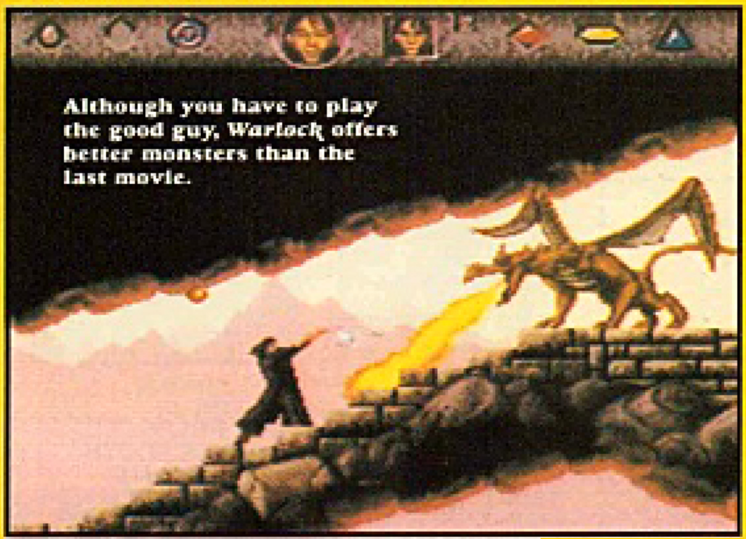
Warlock
Acclaim
Super NES & Genesis

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

The *Warlock* movies established the world in which this game takes place. Although everyone wants to be evil at some point or another, you (unfortunately) don't control the Warlock character and wreak havoc on the planet. But you do have magical abilities as a druid out to stop the Warlock before he unravels Creation itself. You must find six ancient druid runestones scattered throughout the world and defeat the Warlock if there is to be any hope for mankind.

Warlock is a side-scrolling action game, but takes that style a level or two higher with interesting play and nice special FX and sounds. In addition to typical jump-and-shoot (energy blast) button commands, you can also levitate when you touch a certain crystal, control a special orb that can gather objects in out-of-reach locations and cast a variety of spells. These perform such actions as healing, mass destruction via smart bombs and earth tremors. You discover the best place to use these spells as you journey from a small New England town to the Underworld where the Warlock waits.

The action in *Warlock* is pretty standard, but it does add something to a tired genre to have spells and other special actions at your disposal. These additions make this one quite playable, but the graphics and sound FX make it exciting. The visual FX, particularly during the casting of a spell, are cinematic and synced with sound FX for added drama. The music changes with the action throughout the game, so it never becomes boring. *Warlock* is a refreshing change from the usual movie tie-ins, because it expands on the film's plot and creates its own identity.



Although you have to play the good guy, *Warlock* offers better monsters than the last movie.

Heretic represents the forefront of the 3-D games that almost reach out and grab you.

Noctropolis
Electronic Arts
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Noctropolis, the city in which this game is set, is the favorite haunt of a superhero named Darksheer that you control. His alter ego is Peter Grey, a down-on-his-luck comic book fanatic who decides to assume the Darksheer role for a change of pace. *Noctropolis* presents you with the challenges Grey faces as he meets evil villains and other urban lowlifes. The intuitive point-and-click interface doesn't get in the way of the exciting comic-book-style graphics, video clips and assorted visual tricks that establish a unique look for this product. Speech and intense music keep the tension high as you view the city and its denizens from a completely new game perspective.

Heretic
id Software
IBM PC and compatibles floppy disk and CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

The publishers and creators of *Doom* and *Doom II* have come up with another exciting 3-D game. Raven Software developed *Heretic* for id using a modified *Doom II* game interface. As a wizard, you must stop an evil sorcerer through the use of magical weapons and objects. *Heretic* differs from the *Doom* series because it has an inventory that you can fill with magical objects you collect, one of which allows you to fly, giving the game a more enhanced 3-D feel. The new weapons are variations of bolts of energy, but are exciting just the same. A variety of unusual monsters will keep you busy, many of them nastier than those found in other 3-D titles. *Heretic* continues the fine tradition of expansive 3-D action game worlds established by id, and adds a new appearance, plot and overall goal for the necessary variety.

HORRORcade

By RUSS CECCOLA

BLAST THEM ZOMBIES

A mixture of brand-new games and one older title marks this month's HorrorCade visit. Both *Corpse Killer* and *Bureau 13* are recent releases, while *Alone in the Dark 2* is about six months old; I'll review the final title in the *Alone* trilogy next time.

Before we launch into this month's picks, I must mention a shareware game conversion of *Doom* I discovered. My favorite movie monster of all time is the Alien; imagine my excitement when a buddy of mine named Bill (who would look right at home next to Drake and Apone from *Aliens*) told me about a conversion of *Doom* he found on America On-Line. He made a copy for me, and I was hooked. *Aliens TC* (total conversion) transforms your copy of *Doom* (not *Doom II*) into a game that roughly follows the film's story and ends with a confrontation with the Alien Queen in which you can even use a power loader. Facehuggers and warrior Aliens abound in this game of slime-covered walls, hidden recesses and plasma rifles. The designer is a New Zealand college student named Justin Fisher. Write to him on the Internet at J.Fisher@csc.canterbury.ac.nz, and he'll tell you where you can download *Aliens TC*!

Corpse Killer
Digital Pictures
Sega CD, Sega CD 32X, MAC CD and 3DO (PC CD soon!)

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

With a name like this, what would you expect but nonstop action and gore? *Corpse Killer* lives up to its name and provides a lot of violent catharsis for those of you who just can't make it through the day without blowing apart one body or another. You are trapped on Cay Noir island with a strike team you led there to take care of a group of violent citizens. Instead, you find a variety of frenzied and hungry zombies. You can use the Sega Menacer, standard controller or American Laser Games GameGun to blast the putrid flesh of your opponents.

Unlike other shooters, *Corpse Killer* uses video clips and scenery for its graphics, imparting a higher degree of realism to the game. The video segments are smoothest on the Sega CD 32X and 3DO formats, but all versions show off the decent acting of the game's stars and the fine special FX makeup. The only recognizable face is Vincent Schiavelli, the balding character actor who played the restless subway spirit in *Ghost* and the testy magician in *Lord of Illusions*. If you like your games action-packed and challenging, look no further this month than *Corpse Killer*. Zombies go Caribbean!

Excellent video graphics make *Corpse Killer* the next best thing to being there.

***Alone in the Dark 2* pits player against pirates.**

Bureau 13
Take-Two Interactive
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Although there is no *X Files* game at present, the next best thing to Scully and Mulder is *Bureau 13*. The titular agency is a secret government group assigned to study the paranormal, extraterrestrial and supernatural. In this third-person perspective graphic adventure, you pick a pair of agents from a group of six to hunt down a rogue member. The group consists of a priest, witch, vampire, thief, computer hacker and an American Indian in a mechanized suit. You move through various locations in the town of Stratusburg to solve puzzles, confront entities and search for clues to the agent's whereabouts. The rendered 3-D graphics and spooky atmosphere will capture your attention as you use your agents' unique skills (spells, transformation into mist, lock-picking and banishment of evil beings) to survive this thrilling adventure.

Alone in the Dark 2
I-Motion
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Once again, you get to control detective of the macabre Edward Carnby in a challenging mystery/adventure from I-Motion. While the first *Alone in the Dark* took place in a Lovecraftian mansion, Carnby now explores Hell's Kitchen, the hideout of a ruthless pirate named One-Eyed Jack. He has captured a little girl named Grace Saunders whom you must rescue as you explore this adventure, which features highly detailed graphics, unique polygon-based characters, excellent music and cinematic camera angles that switch automatically. This game's puzzles are more creative and the plot has more depth than the first game's tunnels in the bowels of the house. Although pirates don't seem like they belong in a supernatural game, you'll soon find out why they look so green.

HORRORCADE

ALIENS AND OTHER ATARI ACTION

By RUSS CECCOLA

After a series of columns in which I mixed games from different companies, I decided to do something unique and survey titles from one company whose system I haven't covered before. It's a catch-up thing—the company is Atari. If you've never seen the Atari Jaguar in action, it's definitely a system to check out, a real gamer's machine. Jaguar boasts 64-bit games, a decent supply of software (although this wasn't always the case) and a unique controller that combines standard buttons with a keypad for added functionality. Each title includes an overlay for the keypad *à la* Intellivision (remember that system?). Atari also has a CD-ROM attachment on the way and an impressive supply of Jaguar merchandise available. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

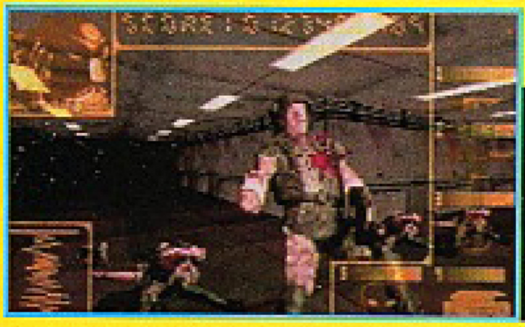
Alien vs. Predator
Atari
Jaguar

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Don't let the title confuse you with Activision's similarly named release, which is nothing more than a glorified fighting game with Aliens and Predators as the combatants. You *don't* want to make that mistake!

Atari's *Alien vs. Predator* is instead a creative and exciting first-person action game in which you can play an Alien, Predator or colonial Marine, each with different goals, weapons and necessary strategies; most people will initially choose to control the Marine. Your goal in this scenario is to reach an escape pod and blow up the infested space station, dodging both the Alien and Predator ships along the way. This is the most challenging of the three scenarios. In the Alien game version, you have to rescue the Queen, who's captured on the Predator ship. Finally, in the Predator version, you must kill the Alien Queen and claim her head as a trophy. In this last version, you gain additional Predator skills and weapons as your score increases, so you almost have to be extra hostile to survive and succeed in your mission.

Atari has done an admirable job of capturing the spookiness of walking down long corridors and peeking around corners as you avoid your enemies in each scenario. The animations are nice, although the Alien movements are a bit clunky. The sound FX and music are the elements that really set the game's pace, from the tense score to the sound FX such as Alien screeches and gunfire. The variety in game play for each character is particularly interesting, because you can use an extended jaw or tail as an Alien and the invisibility skill as a Predator. The characters, gory violence and first-person perspective format will attract players to *Alien vs. Predator*, and they won't be disappointed. Atari spent a lot of time and money to get this title right, and the game delivers the goods.



Alien vs. Predator allows you to take the creatures' side and eliminate those pesky humans.

Your *Doom* will be no less nasty on the Atari.

Brutal Sports Football
Telegames
Jaguar

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠

Telegames is one company that has stood by Atari over the years and produced a number of titles for the Lynx and three so far for the Jaguar. *Brutal Sports Football* will appeal to Fango readers because it is football without rules and with a whole lot more violence and blood. You can win a game by either outscoring your opponent or slaughtering six of his seven team members. Some power-ups affect the game's flow, but others (sword, bomb, ax) have only one purpose—murder. Forget all you know about football before you try this; it's more of an arcade game with football as its basis. The graphics are very cartoonish, as are the animations during "brutal" plays. This title is a great two-player game and tests exactly how dirty and underhanded you can be.

Doom
id Software/Atari
Jaguar

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

When I first heard that *Doom* was on the way for the Jaguar, I cringed. *Doom* is one of those games that you don't want to reduce in size or scope, or mess with its graphics and sound FX. Fortunately, Atari did none of that and, in fact, made the game quite exciting and enjoyable for Jaguar owners. The main reasons for the game's successful translation are the straight port of the graphics and sounds and the use of the keypad to select the weapons and map—functions that require a few extra keys not available on standard game controllers. Cooperative and deathmatch modes for two players are also built into the game so you and a buddy can enter the world of danger together. *Doom* for Jaguar is a successful conversion of a game I previously thought would only work well on a computer.

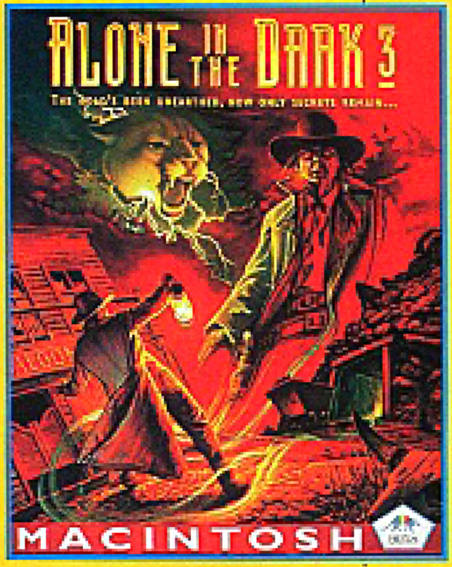
HORROR CADE

VARIATIONS ON A SCREAM

By RUSS CECCOLA

By the time you read this, the year's three major horror games (*Phantasmagoria*, *Harvester* and *The 11th Hour*) should be available. Although they're competing in the computer game arena, each is completely different, so don't forgo one for another. *Harvester* appeals most to gorehounds with a sense of humor. *The 11th Hour* is strictly a puzzle-solving game, although it does include some scavenger-hunt play. *Phantasmagoria* is a true adventure game with plenty of drama, horror and incredible technology layered on top.

Doom fans have probably already snagged the newest collection. If you didn't, it includes a brand new series of levels called *Thy Flesh Consumed* that will really test your *Doom* playing skills. Unlike the hundreds of levels that come packed with the *Doom* books or editors, *Thy Flesh Consumed* was designed by the guys at id Software themselves, so you can be sure that it's a fast-paced challenge.



Finally, I have become fully "connected" over the past month. If you would like to send me comments or criticisms about HorrorCade or ask about other games (not just horror), feel free to contact me at RCCola666@aol.com, RCCola at mailbox 15614 on the ImagiNation Network or 75203.1015@compuserve.com. (Game ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Alone in the Dark 3
I-Motion
IBM PC and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

The *Alone in the Dark* series has been a hit with computer players everywhere, so I'm sorry to announce that *Alone in the Dark 3* is the final installment. However, fans of the game's main character, Edward Carnby, and the play format will be happy to know that I-Motion plans to continue both with a future title. So be patient!

Alone 3 uses typical Western settings and elements, but slightly changes them with the addition of the supernatural. Carnby, your alter ego in the game, is a detective of the occult. In the first game, he investigated a spooky mansion; in the second, it was a ghostly pirate ship. Now it's Slaughter Gulch, a movie set for a ghost town on which strange events have begun to happen.

Alone 3 uses the familiar interface from the first two games, in which you move Carnby around the screen with cursor keys or mouse and use a few weapons and various other objects to fight tenacious enemies and interact with the game environment. *Alone 3* looks like the others, employing polygon graphics and unusual angles, but I-Motion has improved this one with the addition of cinematic scenes and an overhead map on which you can see Carnby's present location. *Alone 3* is a tough game, but the new setting and more interesting plot will have you hooked until you find out what's really going on past the hitching post and saloon.

Syndicate
Atari
Jaguar

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Syndicate is a conversion of a hit PC game from Electronic Arts in which you gather a team of four bionic agents to eliminate enemies and, ultimately, take over the world for your corporation, which is in a pitched battle for this level of power. The attractions of *Syndicate* are its open-ended play, unusual style and incredible graphics. You view the game from a three-quarters perspective and must guide the agents to kill only certain people and control a variety of vehicles. In between missions, you can increase the power of your fighters through upgraded body parts. There is no right or wrong way to play the game—you can conquer the areas in any order you want, as long as you control them all eventually. The highly detailed graphics translate to the Jaguar quite nicely, so fans of the PC version and newcomers alike can enjoy this title. Turn the volume up and your neighbors will think you're under attack!

Doom
Sega
Sega Genesis 32X

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

I'm constantly amazed at the legs this game has had over the past two years and how many conversions have been released. Unfortunately, *Doom* really works best on computers, and most variations won't ever capture the feel of the original. The Sega Genesis 32X game is such a conversion. The sound FX, graphics and gore are all superb, but the game play is not as fluid because you have to use a standard three-button or six-button Genesis controller for all functions. It's a little too awkward for my tastes, but new players might adapt to this edition easily. Still, I wouldn't try the game with a three-button controller. Use the six-button or nothing at all, because it makes scrolling through the weapons a little easier. Play the game first before you take it home, or just buy the Atari Jaguar version, which is the best video-game conversion of this classic to date.

HORROR CADE

First-Person Action, First-Rate Games

By RUSS CECCOLA

Hallelujah! Game companies are finally waking up and realizing that horror fans will buy more of their products if they're worthwhile and not insulting to the genre. There are a number of good games available right now; my reviews might appear many weeks after a game's release date, but for those who missed these products, HorrorCade's inevitable lateness will serve them well. It's just the nature of the magazine biz, folks.

If there are any games you would like to see covered, send a letter to me in care of FANGORIA with your request. If you've forgotten what a letter is altogether, send me e-mail at

75203.1015@compuserve.com, RCCola666@aol.com or 15614 (mailbox number) on the ImagiNation Network. I check my e-mail daily between games of *Doom* and solitaire.

Since I'm Fango's resident computer and games guy, I want to point you to the FANGORIA area on the Microsoft Network. It's pretty cool and will get better if you send in your suggestions for features or enhancements. Fango has really come a long way from small newsstands that turned the gruesome covers to the wall to a prominent spot on the richest American's computer network. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Rise of the Triad: Dark War
Apogee
IBM PCs and compatibles (diskette and CD-ROM)

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Rise of the Triad (*ROTT*—what a great acronym!) takes the *Doom* style of first-person-perspective action game and completely turns it around so that it really stands alone as a unique and exciting product. The object is to disable and destroy the evil inhabitants of a secret monastery on a secluded island who have destroyed Los Angeles and now plan to take over the world. Unlike many other games in this genre, you get to pick one of five characters to control—each of whom has their own blend of speed, accuracy and hit points. Once you start, you'll notice the difference, because you have unlimited bullets for your guns and only have to find ammunition for your missile and magic weapons.

Those who have played *ROTT* have become hooked, and the game now has a cult following. The levels are challenging and full of secret areas and unique objects like jump pads (trampolines, essentially) and movable pillars. The variety of enemies, level layouts and game play has stolen away (at least for now) all those *Doom* fans and addicted them to a new world. *ROTT* will particularly appeal to Fango readers because of the selectable violence level, from none to excessive—and the excessive level is intense! You see heads and body parts fly with each kill. Rotating blades and dropping spears do the most damage, and wait until you see what happens when they combine!

The modem and network games for *ROTT* stand alone as the best for such game play. Everybody gets to choose one of the five characters, a name and uniform color. From there, players can try a number of different games like "capture the flag" and "tag" as well as just unloading weapons on each other. *ROTT* uses a completely different set of levels for modem/network play; participants can send prerecorded insults back and forth and—if they have a microphone hooked up to their sound card—send the jabs live to other players. *ROTT* is a must-buy; if you can, get the CD-ROM version because it offers a number of bonuses the disk version omits.

Primal Rage
Time Warner Interactive
IBM PCs and compatibles CD-ROM, Super NES, Genesis, Game Boy, Game Gear, Saturn, PlayStation, 3DO, Jaguar CD, Sega 32X, Mac CD-ROM

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠☠

When you have the number-one arcade game, it's a no-brainer that you want to convert it to home game systems so fans can continue to get their fix long after the mall closes. Time Warner Interactive took the Atari megahit and, amazingly, has made a great version for every home system.

Primal Rage is basically a fighting game with seven ferocious monsters straight out of prehistoric times, but it is so much fun because the game play calls to mind every Godzilla and oversized monster movie. Because of the capabilities of each game machine, *Primal Rage* varies in its features and FX. I was quite amazed that they managed to fit the digitized images into a playable version on the Game Boy; on the other end of the scale, the PC CD-ROM version ranks as the best. Go get a copy and see why arcade regulars pumped millions of quarters into this hit.

Alien Carnage
Apogee
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Apogee took an older game named *Halloween Harry* and repackaged it as *Alien Carnage*, but it's still just as fun as it was before and worthy of a mention in HorrorCade. The title really does say it all; *Alien Carnage* is a scrolling platform game of many levels in which you guide the eponymous Harry to the locations of hostages and evil green aliens bent on taking over the Earth. When you shoot the aliens with your variety of weapons, they blow apart—hence the carnage of the title. This game is no groundbreaking must-have, but it's a nice, challenging diversion from its bigger, better brothers on the shelves.

HORROR CADE

HAUNTING YOUR COMPUTER

By RUSS CECCOLA

The 11th Hour was promised to stores over a year ago, but it kept getting pushed back farther and farther, like the final movies from Orion Pictures. Fortunately, the game made its Halloween 1995 goal and has been selling phenomenally ever since. Unfortunately, in that time frame the developers forgot to include a credit for me as the writer/editor of the manual—a job I finished those many months ago. So I have some room to rib them for their oversight, especially after the number of drafts we went through…

This month's trio of games all came out last fall, but are still hot sellers. They all combine spooky settings and elements of horror with familiar game play, so they're perfect for a lonely night by the computer. I plan to concentrate the next HorrorCade on some gruesome video games, so you console owners out there shouldn't think I've forgotten you. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

The 11th Hour
Virgin Interactive Entertainment/Trilobyte
IBM PCs and compatibles CD-ROM and Mac CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠☠

The 11th Hour takes tough puzzles like you might have found in its older brother, the groundbreaking *The 7th Guest*, and adds a new interface and better story for one of those rare sequels that outshines its predecessor. I have seen *The 11th Hour*'s evolution over the past two years and am still thrilled with the final incarnation of this intense challenge for puzzle lovers. The game play is very simple, but different than you might expect. You control Carl Denning Jr., a reporter for a tabloid show called *Case Unsolved* whose producer and lover, Robin Morales, has disappeared after she expressed her desire to investigate strange occurrences in the spooky Stauf mansion from the original game. The mansion has become dilapidated over the decades, so *The 11th Hour* has an entirely different look. The game play is quite simple—solve the puzzles to reveal more of the story and, eventually, have a faceoff with Stauf's evil spirit. *The 11th Hour* also includes scavenger hunts and strategy games to vary the game play.

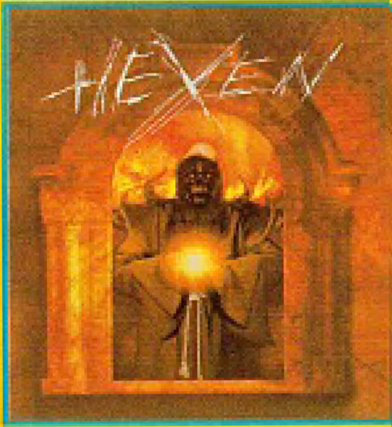
Personally, I hate the strategy games in both *The 7th Guest* and *The 11th Hour*. I'd much rather have puzzles with a limited number of solutions. If I wanted to play strategy games, I'd try something else. In fact, the microscope game in *The 7th Guest* was impossible to solve, so don't get too worked up over such challenges in *The 11th Hour*. The "GameBook" interface consolidates a number of functions, including hints, in a handy contraption that fits into the plot. Such touches, as well as better video and a stronger story with three possible endings, make *The 11th Hour* a tough but enjoyable journey through Stauf's nightmarish world. The puzzles have greater variety, but will still have you pounding your head against your monitor. Isn't that what you wanted? Just don't leave bloodstains…

Better be clever or you'll get the cleaver in *The 11th Hour*.

Witchaven
Capstone
IBM PCs and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

When you think of witches, you conjure up images of broomsticks and cauldrons in your mind. The world of *Witchaven* may be ruled by such a witch, but you'll see far more terrifying and dangerous sights throughout this first-person-perspective action game's many levels. *Witchaven* plays like *Doom* and other similar titles, but adds spells, stunning graphics and a number of other interface features that really give the game a unique identity. The monsters you have to fight are animated clay models, so they take on a strange appearance and motion. The game levels seem straight out of Dante's works, so there are plenty of neat elements to keep your attention. *Witchaven* is a first-rate action game for fans of this genre. Coming soon: an add-on disc with more levels!



Hexen
id Software/Raven Software
IBM PCs and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

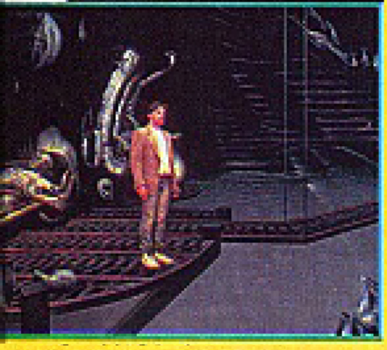
Hexen is a technological sequel to *Heretic* because it has a similar look and feel to that first-person-perspective action game, but it provides a new set of monsters and weapons for you to enjoy. From wendigos to death wyverns, you'll have to learn strategies for avoiding and defeating a whole slew of interesting monsters. One minor game play aspect completely changes the way you'll think about action games. The levels of *Hexen* are not linear; you actually have to travel back and forth between these areas or "hubs" to transport special objects. This nonlinearity keeps *Hexen* constantly challenging and gives you a reason to learn to navigate a safe path through the game areas. Once again, id Software and Raven Software have taken action games to another captivating level.

HORROR CODE

UNPLEASANT CYBERDREAMS

By RUSS CECCOLA

The mission of the new Cyberdreams company is to pair the most imaginative writers, filmmakers and artists with computer professionals to create the best games possible. Their first two titles, *Dark Seed* and *CyberRace*, just missed the mark because the former was too difficult and, indeed, unfair to players, while the latter was not as exciting and captivating as it needed to be to surpass the competing racing games. Cyberdreams has more than made up for these disappointments with a trio of titles that I fully recommend. Although they all came out in the fall, I decided to review them together in this HorrorCode because they're all worthy of your attention, especially the first one. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)



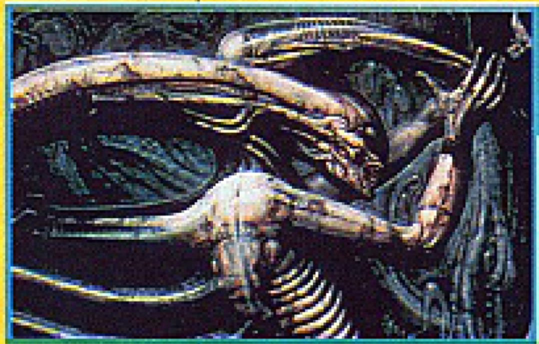
Plant yourself in *Dark Seed II*, and horror is sure to grow.

Dark Seed II
Cyberdreams
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Dark Seed introduced players to the Dark World, a parallel universe populated by creatures and scenery straight from the canvas of surreal artist H.R. Giger. You controlled Mike Dawson, the link between our universe and the Dark World, in his attempts to save humanity from the aliens' invasion. *Dark Seed II* marks the return of the extraterrestrials and their world, but this game surpasses the original in every way and kept my attention over the course of two or three nights until I solved the adventure's challenging mystery.

You guide Mike Dawson once again in *Dark Seed II*, but this time he is under suspicion from the local fuzz for his ex-girlfriend's murder. Players use a simple point-and-click interface to manipulate inventory items, talk to other characters and move around, and the game contains an especially useful map that allows you to jump straight to particular locations in both worlds. Giger's art is more animated and varied in *Dark Seed II*, right down to the Dark World characters themselves. The game's difficulty and puzzles are reasonable and include such challenges as a maze, the operation of alien machinery and the chasing down of clues that lead you to the real murderer. *Dark Seed II* is everything that the first game should have been and quite a good adventure for everyone—not just horror enthusiasts.



Isn't this a much more interesting screen saver than *Simpsons* characters?

H.R. Giger Screen Saver
Cyberdreams
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM (for Windows 3.1 or Windows 95)

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

It was only logical that Cyberdreams take Giger's artwork and showcase it on its own; this screen saver is the result. It is divided into 10 "modules," each of which highlights a particular work of art or group of similar characters (one is derived from Giger's work for *Species*). Although the screen saver functions are not particularly unique, Cyberdreams has picked great art and added an original short story from Harlan Ellison, as well as a cassette version read by the author, about Giger's work.

I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream
Cyberdreams
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Those who have read the Harlan Ellison short story on which this entry is based might wonder how Cyberdreams could possibly derive a game from it. Ellison and the designers sat down and hashed out profiles and backgrounds for the story's five principals that became the basis for each character's part of the adventure. *Scream* is the story of Earth's last five humans, who have been captured inside the belly of a supercomputer that killed the rest of the world's population. The computer, known as AM, tortures the five poor souls relentlessly and will not let them kill themselves. The whole game is rather morbid, but you can play it in bite-size chunks as you try to gain freedom for the five characters from their fears and guilt and from AM. The Super VGA graphics are superb, and Ellison himself recorded AM's voice. This title may not be for everyone, but it's worth the effort for those looking for something off the beaten track.

Pray your own computer doesn't get ideas from *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*.

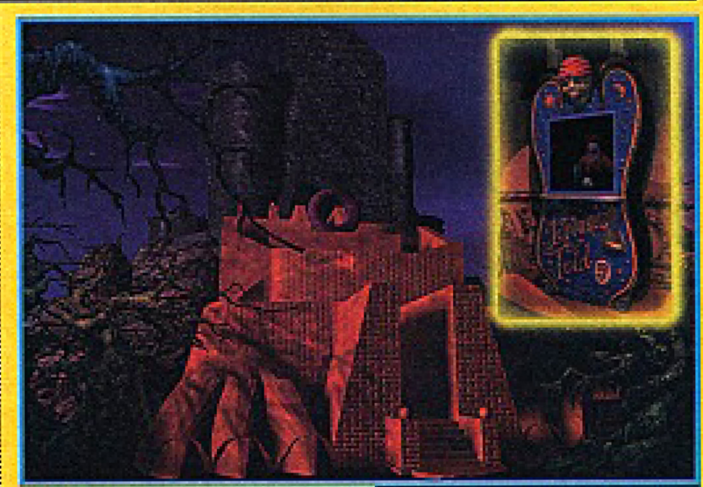
HORRORCADE

SIERRA'S PEAKS OF FEAR

By RUSS CECCOLA

I'm still working on finishing up the reviews of hot titles from the fall, so please bear with me here in the HorrorCade. For whatever reason, a number of games with Fangorian appeal have come out over the last quarter, and I'll take a good look at them as time and space permit.

A recent reader letter suggested that I cover more Macintosh games. I'll try to do that, but there really aren't many Mac-specific games out there—let alone horror titles. I have a couple in mind for the next column, but my reviews of PC games also apply to the Mac versions, since they're just ports of the PC editions anyway—often enhanced to be even better for the Mac operating system. Well, that's enough computer-speak, so let's talk about games instead… (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)



You can count on plenty of *Shivers* roaming around this place.

The Beast Within challenges Gabriel Knight in his latest adventure.

The Beast Within
Sierra
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers was quite a refreshing change in direction for adventure games at the time of its release, since it combined horror, mystery and serious subject matter in an irresistible manner. *The Beast Within*, the first of many sequels to *Gabriel Knight*, sends paranormal detective Gabriel to Germany to investigate a series of murders and confront his past. Gabriel's search for answers points toward werewolves and centuries-old secrets. Grace, his intelligent and obstinate assistant, both advises and protects him in his journeys through Munich and eventually plays an important part in the end of the adventure and the mystery.

Unlike the animated original game, *The Beast Within* uses live actors and actresses to bring Gabriel, Grace and the rest of the characters to life. This technique often fails in today's games since it only serves as window dressing, but in this case the live performers enhance the adventure's drama and tension. Location shots in Germany serve as backgrounds to the action shot in Sierra's California studio and complete the illusion that transports you to German soil. *Beast Within*'s interface better suits a detective game than its predecessor's, but it's all intuitive, so nobody should have any trouble getting deep into the story quickly.

The impressive visuals and music make *The Beast Within* more like the cinematic games people expect these days without overdoing it. Some puzzles are tricky, but veterans and newcomers alike should be able to handle most of the game's challenges without too much trouble. Designer Jane Jensen has once again combined her variety of interests into a hot adventure that appeals to the ravenous side of us all.

Mortal Kombat 3
Acclaim
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM, Genesis, Super NES, Game Gear, Play Station and Saturn

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

The genre of fighting games lives! I keep expecting that this particular style will go away, but smart designers have kept them alive for the addicted players who must have more and more. *Mortal Kombat 3* has a much slicker look and feel than even its immediate predecessor and introduces a variety of new moves and fighting techniques. Still, this update doesn't mark such a radical change that *Kombat* fanatics can't get into the game immediately. Acclaim released this title simultaneously on a variety of platforms, so it's likely that you'll be able to walk home with a version for your favorite gaming system. Let Mortal Kombat begin!

Shivers
Sierra
IBM PC and compatibles CD-ROM

Fright: ☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

When I first heard about *Shivers*, I thought it might be a kiddie adventure *à la* R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series of books and videos. *Shivers* does fit into Stine's world as far as imagery and attitude go, but it's quite a challenging adventure on its own. The object is to survive a night in a creepy museum. You do this through the solution of a variety of creative puzzles in the *Myst* and *7th Guest* tradition that are both visual and musical in nature. You'll be kept quite busy by the ghouls and spooks in *Shivers*, a captivating adventure that will make your head hurt as well as your skin crawl.

HORRORCADE

EXCELLENCE IN "EVIL"

By RUSS CECCOLA

Every now and then, I discover a game that just blows me away and causes me to drop everything to play it exclusively. *Resident Evil* is just such a title. Run out and buy it now! I wouldn't make such a shameless plug if it wasn't so good. That's why I'm breaking from tradition and doing an expanded review of the game by itself in this month's HorrorCade. You'll see that *Resident Evil* is the only game I've reviewed that gets top ratings in every category; it takes full advantage of the PlayStation's graphics, sound chips and hardware for an incredible experience. Right now, the PlayStation and Saturn are neck-and-neck in sales of both units and games, but products like *Resident Evil* make Sony's system that much better. It's worth getting a PlayStation just for this game. You won't be sorry. Next time, I'll get back to the regular format, but for now let's get evil! (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Resident Evil
Capcom
PlayStation

Fright: ☠☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠☠

I first saw *Resident Evil* in its Beta version, and even that knocked me off my seat. The premise is nothing new, but the presentation makes the plot seem fresh. You control one of two commandos, Chris Redfield or Jill Valentine, who must infiltrate a spooky mansion and grounds to find out what happened to both its inhabitants and the first commando unit sent to investigate the strange goings-on there. The game has a third-person overhead 3-D perspective in which the characters and

Working the bugs out of your computer was never like this.

monsters are drawn with complex polygons that you won't even notice because they're so smooth. You guide Redfield or Valentine through the mansion to uncover clues, fight monsters and, ultimately, confront the source of the evil that has permeated the location.

The game play is a little bit tricky at first, because you have to get used to the movements of your character in three dimensions. You use the controller to turn left and right and move forward and back, but the skewed perspective *á la* the *Alone in the Dark* series might throw you off. You use a variety of weapons to fight the monsters that pop up out of nowhere—from a shotgun to a bazooka. Again, you may have to practice aiming the weapon and firing at stationary objects before you're ready for a real game, but the instinct will kick in when you need it. Redfield and Valentine can carry a limited supply of objects, so you have to use storage boxes found throughout the mansion to store things you don't need immediately. This is realistic, but makes game play a bit tougher as you realize you don't have any more ammo in the midst of a battle.

The game's monsters are a spooky, dripping collection of beasts that would have you running for the door if they weren't up on your screen. The giant spiders are really giant—much bigger than your character. The acid-spitting zombies and mutant dogs are also pretty relentless. In addition, the monsters have a knack for scaring the hell out of you when you least expect it. In the past, slow CD-ROM drives and poor designs prevented true frights, but PlayStation and Capcom have taken care of that old nuisance with *Resident Evil*. I literally dropped the controller at some points at the old "cat-jumping-out-of-the-cupboard" type of scares here. They may be clichéd in films, but they work in this format. More importantly, the atmosphere is very spooky and dark, so you're constantly on edge anyway—just a little scare and you jump.

The graphics and animation are stupendous. Fully rendered backgrounds define a look for this title unlike any other. Most games take place in environments born of fantasies, but the mansion and grounds in *Resident Evil* could be just down the block. The sound FX and music keep the game frightening throughout, especially during the more challenging parts when you can't act fast enough because of the tension and fear.

The box provides clear evidence of the game's nearest cinematic brethren: The commando in the art closely resembles Bruce Campbell from the *Evil Dead* films, right down to his stance, and *Resident Evil* would work well as an *Evil Dead* movie.

Capcom has hit a bull's-eye with *Resident Evil*. The

***Evil*'s complex game play is challenging even before the ghouls show up.**

only complaint I have is with the "save game" feature. You have to find a typewriter ribbon in the game and put it in the typewriter to save it; unfortunately, there are only a few ribbons, so you have to save wisely. This system is awful, which is surprising considering that everything else about this one is so good. *Resident Evil* really stands alone as far as both horror and action games go. Make sure you play with both characters, because each way is totally different and the two together also allow for multiple endings.

Make Capcom's new terror title a permanent *Resident* of your game collection.

HORROR CADE

MULTIPLYING THE MENACE

By RUSS CECCOLA

I've followed *Doom* and its sequels before, but the era of id Software's incredibly popular game engine and its clones from other companies has now come to an end. New games like *Duke Nukem 3-D* and even id Software's own *Quake* put the previous generation of first-person-perspective action games to shame, despite the fact that they're still fun, challenging and very detailed. *Heretic* and, especially, *Hexen* took that level of game play as far as it could go. For now, I plan to avoid full reviews of *Doom* conversions or upgrades after this column. There are far too many other games out there to cover. To end this era properly, here's a final look at the latest batch of enhancement

Master Levels offers plenty to master indeed as you continue through the *Doom* universe.

discs. They all greatly expand the game play and fun of the original products (*Doom II*, *Heretic* and *Hexen*, in this case)—which you must own to use these products—and allow you to squeeze that final value out of the titles. Also, since everything comes out on CD-ROM these days, I won't bother highlighting the format in the blurbs for each game. I'll just make note if the game is available only on diskette. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Master Levels for Doom II
id Software
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Master Levels for Doom II is an interesting hybrid of *Doom* and *Doom II* levels, with a poster of the strange cover art thrown in for good measure. This disc alone should keep the more avid *Doom* fans busy for many, many hours. The titular levels were designed by the best of the best designers and approved by the folks at id Software, so you know they're going to be tough, fun and creative before you open the box. That evaluation holds up after playing them, too. And I thought I was good! Boy, did I have to work hard—and sometimes cheat—to get through these levels.

For those who want even more fun, there are over 3,000 *Doom* levels on the disc, collected as *Maximum Doom*. Many of them are quite creative, but this assortment is really only an attempt by id to use their name leverage to get people to buy another collection—something other shareware houses did months ago.

Feel the power of the *Deathkings* in id's update of *Hexen*.

Deathkings of the Dark Citadel
id Software
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

The best of the *Doom* generation of action games was *Hexen*, because it added different play to the established norm by requiring you to travel between "hubs" to collect objects needed in other hubs. Suddenly, the *Doom*-type universe was no longer as linear as it had always been. *Deathkings* is a direct sequel to *Hexen* that offers three new hubs and 20 more levels of game play as you take the fight against the wizards and other medieval enemies to a much more dramatic level. The *Deathkings* disc also contains Deathmatch modes for multiplayer junkies who still want to try out their modem/on-line skills.

Heretic: Shadow of the Serpent Riders
id Software
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Heretic expanded the *Doom II* engine with flying and spellcasting abilities prior to the advent of *Hexen* and its advanced game play. *Shadow* contains two new episodes for *Heretic* that don't really change the game play at all, but instead offer more of it. Of the three products I've reviewed in this HorrorCade, *Shadow* is the most accessible for novice players because it doesn't complicate things too much with difficult levels or the more challenging *Hexen* style of game play. I would recommend this add-on disc over the other two—in terms of getting started—for that reason alone. *Shadow* also has the coolest box of the three—which resembles, and in fact opens like, a book—and the best-designed CD-ROM jewel case and booklet, which has nothing to do with game play, but still matters somehow.

HORRORCADE

READY, AIM, NUKEM!

By RUSS CECCOLA

You may have heard a lot about *Quake*, id Software's latest first-person-perspective action game. Although I'll review the game in full in a future column, I'm not impressed with the beta version that's available for download at presstime. Right now, the real winner in the action/adventure category is *Duke Nukem 3D*. So I've taken a look at the two *Duke Nukem 3D* products in this month's column and will let you know all about *Quake* once I've spent some serious playtime with the full game, not merely a beta version. Who knows? I might like it more by then. For now, let's jump to the future in Los Angeles and also examine a rather unusual, but fun and informative, multimedia title. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Duke Nukem 3D
3D Realms/FormGen
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

The first thing you'll notice when you pick up the box for *Duke Nukem 3D* is that the cover art bears a striking resemblance to the poster for *Army of Darkness*; Duke Nukem's stance calls to mind Bruce Campbell. Well, it's no mistake on the part of 3D Realms because, at various times in the game, you'll hear some comments from Duke that sound like they were taken right out of *The Adventures of Brisco County Jr.* or the *Evil Dead* series, although adapted to the game situation at hand. These touches of parody really define the attitude of fun and campy humor that runs throughout *Duke Nukem 3D*'s 28 levels.

You take the part of Duke, a hero of the future who must rid Los Angeles of the aliens who have invaded its fine streets. A variety of weapons makes the game quite exciting, as do the addition of a jetpack and underwater game play. The environment is extremely realistic, from the interiors of the buildings to the cityscape over which you can fly and climb. The levels take you from the streets of LA to the moon for a climactic battle with the chief alien honchos. You'll be impressed with the game's detail, from items like working light switches and other equipment you can use to the hidden rooms that fit into the architecture of the levels.

The monsters are straight out of a sci-fi flick, although they are a bit goofy and sometimes unrealistically warp in out of nowhere for an unfair advantage. The graphics and sounds are all up to snuff, so you won't feel cheated at all by the intense action. A level editor and great DukeMatch multiplayer action finish off this package. *Duke Nukem 3D* is hot right now; although the game's not perfect and the monsters could have had more personality, I had a lot of fun running around its violent world.

Step into the shoes of a Bruce Campbell-esque monster fighter in *Duke Nukem 3D*.

Duke Nukem 3D Screen Saver & Entertainment Pack
3D Realms/FormGen
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Taking their cue from the *Doom II* screensaver, 3D Realms put together a *Duke Nukem 3D*-themed saver that fans of the game will want to have on their computer for a full *Duke Nukem 3D* makeover. You get five screensaver modules with the disc, one of which should be especially fun for Fango readers. "Body Parts" fills up the screen with assorted pieces that resemble the carnage after a major war. You'll also find wallpaper images, sound files, music, jigsaw puzzles and other surprises in the package, so its name appropriately reflects that this is more than just a screensaver. The "Carnage Meter" will certainly keep you in stitches.

A new CD-ROM allows you to safely explore the world of *The Unexplained*.

The Unexplained
FlagTower
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

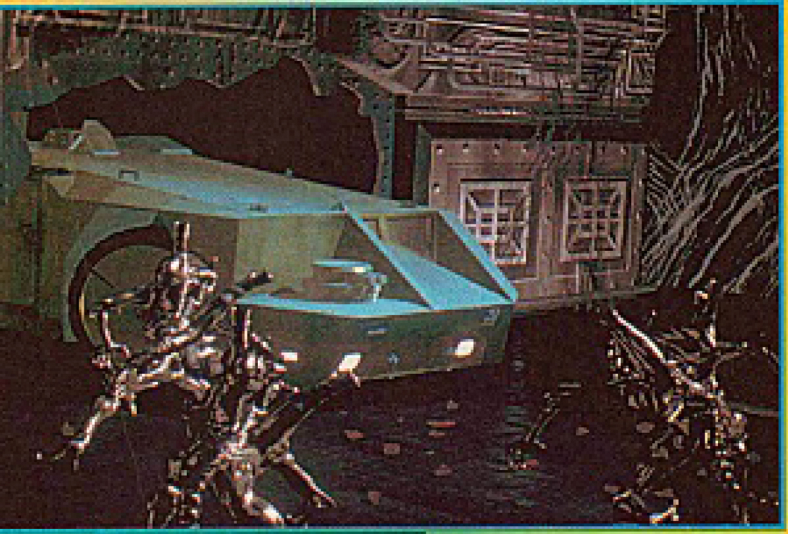
I've always been interested in the supernatural and UFOs, so I was quite enthralled with *The Unexplained*. This is not a game, but instead thoroughly examines the world of the weird topic by topic with sounds, video clips and plenty of text for you to read late into the night. An online index and glossary support your investigation into things like crop circles and strange rains, but one of the most useful features of this product is the list of related reading material and Internet sites with further information about the CD-ROM's topics. You might not see a ghost in the real world, but if you like *The X Files* and believe in strange occurrences, you'll definitely want to check out *The Unexplained*.

HORRORCADE

ALIEN RESURRECTIONS

By RUSS CECCOLA

This month, I've decided to dedicate the HorrorCade to monsters, in this case Aliens and vampires. In this interesting collection of games, you can participate in a few creature hunts and a whole lot of bloodletting. The monster from the original *Alien* has been my favorite since I first saw it; nothing has surpassed it for me, so it was a great treat to see two new *Alien* games come out in the last six months. Each of these takes a different approach to the double-jawed creatures, but you'll get a kick, if not a bite, out of both. Now, off to the dark corridors... (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)



Now you can experience the *Alien Trilogy* all in one game.

Alien Trilogy
Acclaim
PlayStation and Saturn

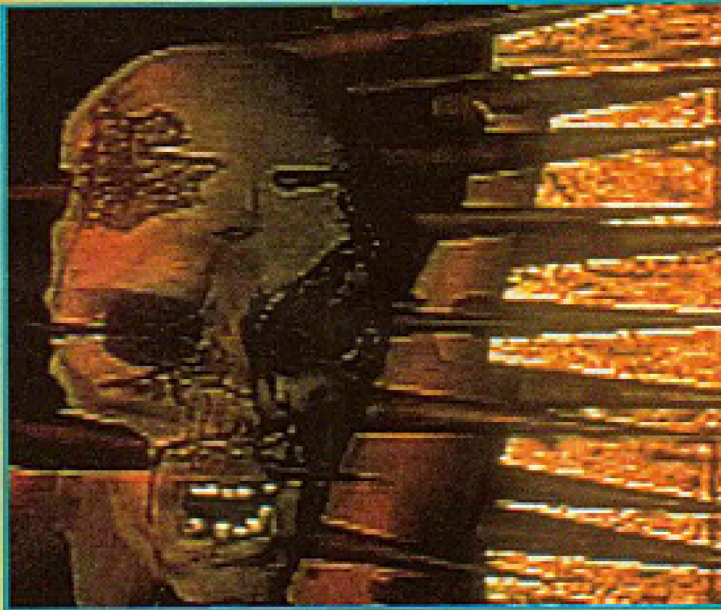
Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

The first of our *Aliens* games actually spans the atmospheres, if not the actual locations, of the films in the *Alien* series. You have to return to the sites of the movies' original conflicts to deal with new batches of Aliens in this first-person-perspective action title. You'll find facehuggers, chestbursters, warrior Aliens and even a few human troublemakers to dispatch. Best of all, there are three Alien Queens. The "trilogy" of the title means that the game has been divided into three groups of levels, with the Queens as the final "bosses." This setup is fine, but I would have preferred open-ended play or some different kind of setup which was less like a typical video game. Still, I had a blast getting rid of the biomechanical beasts, although my thumbs hurt a lot after playing. This one is pure action from start to finish.

Aliens
Mindscape
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Taking a completely different look at the Aliens is this graphics-intensive title from Mindscape, a company not known for such games. Once again, you are sent in to kill off the pesky beasts, but in this case, you have two perspectives (first-person and three-quarters) in which you conduct the war against the creatures. The story is set in the world of the Dark Horse *Aliens* books, the first series of which got me hooked on comics. You have to journey to Outpost B54-C to get rid of the Aliens. It's especially difficult to play this game at first because it blows you away with its gorgeous graphic environments, but once the Aliens start popping out, you'll remember your head or lose it. Unlike *Alien Trilogy*, *Aliens* concentrates more on the adventure style of game play, but don't let this dissuade you from the title; there's still plenty of action. The difference is that you get the story in much bigger chunks than the information screens and in-between movies of *Alien Trilogy*.



D gets an A for visuals but a C for longevity.

D
Acclaim
IBM PCs and compatibles, PlayStation and Saturn

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Vampires have been popular for centuries, and with *D*, which stands for many things, they're back again in LA. You have to solve a mystery and confront several really disturbing images and ideas before you can break free from this game's powers. It uses rendered 3-D images to show off the artists' talents, but they're not complemented by game play and performance—the acting is downright atrocious in some scenes. The game lasts just a few short hours, so you have to wonder who thought it would be enough for the money. I found *D* quite entertaining, but it may be the perfect example of how rentals could someday kill off the retail market. Try it out before you buy it; you may just finish it.

HORRORCADE

SHAKY "QUAKE"

By RUSS CECCOLA

Quake has been the talk of the gaming world for a long time now, but in its initial shareware release, I really wasn't impressed with the overall product. We were told for a long time that *Quake* would be light years beyond *Doom* and *Doom II* in its interface and game play, but all I noticed was an increase in graphic detail and lighting. Because of its importance, I'm devoting a little more space to my *Quake* review and rounding out this HorrorCade with a worthy sequel to a popular game from last fall. Let the battles begin! Hand me that ax... (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Quake
id Software
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠

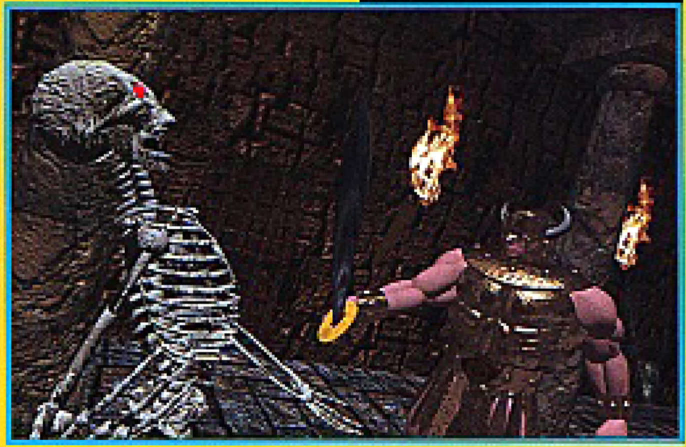
The hype around *Quake* was created by id Software and *Doom*-obsessed media flocks. The latter group wanted a new champion to rally behind, and *Quake* seemed like the one to watch. Unfortunately, *Quake* took too long to come out, and *Duke Nukem 3D* stole much of the game's thunder in the first-person-perspective action genre. id managed to set up a sweet distribution deal for *Quake*, so chances are very good that you couldn't miss the product and may well have already bought it. As it turns out, *Quake* is a decent title, but not what I would have expected as a next-generation game engine from id. These guys are quite impressive game designers with a taste for the absurd, violent and fun, but I was never so underwhelmed with a product as I was with *Quake*.

Think of *Quake* as almost a super-*Doom*. The major change in the engines involves the quality of the graphics. While *Doom* always looked blocky, *Quake* is absolutely beautiful in its detail, lighting and colors, and is especially impressive with a 3-D graphics board. Here's a hint: scan the flames with such a board to see something neat. But beyond the graphics, *Quake* failed to impress. The monsters are ugly polygon jumbles that get stuck behind walls when they're chasing you. The levels are OK, but you'll quickly finish them and want more.

I just didn't like the overall feel of *Quake*, which is closer to an in-between title, despite the cool weapons such as a nail gun and ax. It wasn't fresh enough for me to enjoy both the environment and the game play. If you're crazy about such products, you may have fun with *Quake* if you treat it as just another *Doom*, but if you still want that total feeling of immersion in and interaction with an environment, stick with *Duke Nukem 3D*.

Despite the hype, *Quake* is hardly earth-shaking.

No bones about it...



Witchaven II: Blood Vengeance
Capstone
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

...Witchaven is a cut above in the horror game field.

Capstone did quite well with the original *Witchaven*, so it was no surprise to find this sequel landing in my greedy little hands. This game picks up where the first one left off; you've destroyed the witches and are heading for home, only to find out that another witch is out for your head. Here we go again...

Witchaven II is significant because it uses the Build engine designed by 3D Realms for *Duke Nukem 3D* and effectively put to use in both *Witchaven* products. The game has a spooky, realistic feel to it, especially in levels with low ceilings and large forests. There's plenty to do in this first-person-perspective game, and new weapons, spells and monsters are involved. Maybe it's because I dig the theme and weapons so much, but *Witchaven II* kept me playing well beyond the first few levels. Network play and 3-D headset options add to the fun, but the most important feature is the level editor. I've put together some pretty wild levels with this feature, as I'm sure you'll be able to. Although there hasn't been much press about this product, this fine effort from the folks in Miami certainly deserves it.

HORRORCADE

Solve the "Puzzle"—Or Else!

By RUSS CECCOLA

While movies and TV are consistently rife with disturbing images of horror, both real and imaginary, computer screens are just as blessed with the release of *Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle of Flesh*. It's not a direct sequel to 1995's *Phantasmagoria*, but an entry in the continuing Sierra On-Line horror series that will bear the original's name. I must make one thing clear from the start: This game is not for children, but should instead only be savored by mature adults who can handle blood, gore, shocks and psychological horror (i.e., Fango readers). Now let's get right to business and delve beneath the skin into *Phantasmagoria*'s bloody flesh. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle of Flesh
Sierra On-Line
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

A Puzzle of Flesh goes far beyond its predecessor in the *Phantasmagoria* series to deliver some good scores, great FX and high-quality video that can only run on a high-end, Pentium-equipped, Windows 95-based computer. This game takes advantage of the power of such a machine to deliver the goods. I was impressed from the start, particularly by the story, and disturbed by the many images and sequences that pepper the plot with scares and weirdness. This one still doesn't go as far as last column's featured title, *Harvester*, but nothing else probably ever will. That's not a complaint, nor do I think you'll find fault with *A Puzzle of Flesh*.

We don't know what this thing is, but we'd want to kill it too.

You control Curtis Craig, an ex-patient from an insane asylum who has been free for exactly a year. He's got a great girlfriend, a decent job and a good life. You know that won't last too long! Curtis begins seeing apparitions, illusions and disturbing images, and he's about to lose his mind once again. Then coworkers start to bite the dust, and he becomes the prime suspect. You have to investigate the pasts of Curtis and his corporation to get to the center of the supernatural and psychological web in which he's caught. Along the way, expect surprises, tough puzzles and a great deal of exploration and conversation.

A Puzzle of Flesh's interface improves upon *Phantasmagoria*'s bare-bones controls. Your inventory fits along the bottom of the screen, with an eye icon for close-up examination and a puzzle piece icon for game functions like saving and loading saved games. You move the cursor around the screen to go in different directions and interact with objects and people when the cursor changes shape. Two interface additions that will make game play and hunting for clues in conversations easier are the film reel icon and the map. If you click on the reel, you can review all of the movie sequences you've seen. Many contain valuable clues or are just cool to watch because of the special FX, so you'll find the clips' accessibility important. The map takes you immediately to places you've visited before with a single click, so gone is the wasted time in which you roam from location to location.

Don't ax for easy solutions to the *Puzzle of Flesh*.

Puzzle of Flesh's special FX, graphics, video and sound elements bestow an overall polished feel on the game. It looks and sounds slick, with much of the credit going to the state-of-the-art video processing. The characters were filmed on real sets, so the impact of the scenes and the combination of video with computer-generated visuals will keep you on the edge of your seat. Much of the game's sickness and intensity come from twisted and creative designer Lorelei Shannon and director Andy Hoyos, both of whom have a longtime interest in horror. The teamup works quite well on this project, although the efforts of a large crew beyond these principals gave the game its color (mostly blood red). You'll even find an actress from the first *Phantasmagoria* in the cast!

A Puzzle of Flesh came about much more quickly than *Phantasmagoria*, largely due to subsequent advances in technology. The success of titles like this one will help cement horror as one of the key gaming genres alongside action, sports and adventure. Try this one out, and you're certain to find some things to make your skin crawl.

HORRORCADE

A Blizzard of Battles

By RUSS CECCOLA

When the phenomenal popularity of the online version of *Diablo* became clear, I couldn't ignore this effort from Blizzard Entertainment, a small company with big vision and creativity. I decided to cover all of the rookie's titles in one edition of HorrorCade so that, if you like one of their games, you can have ready access to the others. Without further ado, I should let the master of the inferno step up to the plate first. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Internet assistance might help in a battle like this.

Diablo
Blizzard Entertainment
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Diablo is successful in providing such great RPG experiences that it was no wonder the game also took over the online community. You control one of three types of characters (warrior, rogue or sorcerer) as you battle through underworld caverns and crypts beneath a village that you're out to save from the titular Satan-type character and his vile creatures. Fango fans should love this one, because it brings to mind the battles from *Army of Darkness*. The game play takes place in an angled, diagonal, three-quarters view of the action as you make your way through rooms and over burnt terrain.

If you can imagine a hell full of beasts, demons and creatures and permeated by fire and lava, then you have accurately pictured *Diablo*. Frightening animated movies punctuate the game play and create the overall unsettling mood. The most attractive feature is that the program creates a unique layout and set of levels every time you start a new game, so fresh play is guaranteed. You won't get sick of *Diablo*.

However, if you do somehow get tired of the game and want more than the stand-alone play, you can connect to Blizzard's Battle.net, a free Internet service in which you can join up with other players to explore, once again, random environments and game layouts in your ultimate quest to defeat Diablo. The online play has received plenty of attention from fans, but either way, *Diablo* is an addictive, exciting journey through fiery passages and monster-strewn areas. You can't play just once!

Diablo actually makes the prospect of going to hell seem exciting.

WarCraft Battle Chest
Blizzard Entertainment
IBM PCs and compatibles and Macintosh

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Blizzard entered the software arena with *WarCraft: Orcs and Humans* and quickly proved that they knew how to design an addictive strategy game. The *WarCraft Battle Chest* collects that first game, as well as its sequel, *WarCraft II: Tides of Darkness*, and its sequel's expansion set, *WarCraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal*. In all of these games, you can control either the Orc or human civilization in an all-out, strategy-based battle with the feel of an RPG. You use weapons, magic and other methods to win melee rounds and launch attacks against the enemy. The second game introduced multiplayer capabilities and new units, while the expansion set offers 24 more missions for you to tackle. You can't go wrong with either game separately, but the *Battle Chest* is the best value for your money, since it collects both games and the mission pack and includes both IBM and Mac versions in the same package. I've played many hours of *WarCraft* games and know that I can always turn to them for strategy and action, whether I want to control the good guys or the monsters.

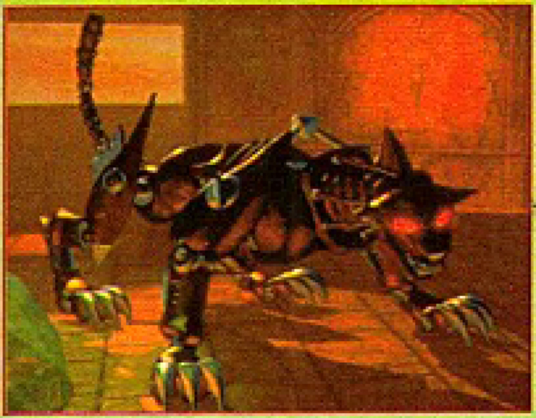
Open the *WarCraft Battle Chest* for exciting conflict and impressive graphics.

HORRORCADE

"Realms" Worth Exploring

By RUSS CECCOLA

When I first saw *Realms of the Haunting* at a press event last summer, I knew that it was a special game to which I'd dedicate an entire column. It fully embodies the elements that Fango readers want in any kind of entertainment, whether it be a film, book or adventure game. Like the *Alone in the Dark* series, a trilogy that all horror enthusiasts should own, *Realms* combines action and adventure effectively for an intense, horrific experience that will leave you hungry for more. Unlike the *Alone in the Dark* games, however, *Realms* is long enough to satisfy that craving on its own. Without further ado, take my hand and accompany me to the Apocalypse. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)


In *Realms of the Haunted*, some of the creatures sport a bio-metallic look.

Realms of the Haunting
Interplay
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

In *Realms of the Haunting*, you play Adam Randall, a brave soul who confronts evil beings and supernatural events after receiving a cryptic "message" from his father that leads him to a house at the crossroads of eternity. At this modern-day English dwelling in the remote village of Hellston, you have to search for the broken fragments of a powerful object known as the Shrive. The quest will take you into four realms (Earth, Hell, Spirit and Divine), each accessed from the spooky building, and then you must unite the Shrive with the Soulstone to save the Earth from destruction. This is heavy stuff for an adventure, but it all works because the game contains many other elements of the occult, parapsychology and demon worship, much like an H.P. Lovecraft story. In Hellston, the Apocalypse is on the way and you're there to stop it.

At first glance, you might think that *Realms* is just another *Doom* clone with a better plot, but that assessment is far from the truth. Although you'll fight monster after monster in the game's realms, you'll also be forced to use your brain—if you still have one after the creatures try to rip it out. The puzzles, combat and exploration elements could have been mangled in the hands of a lesser development team, but veteran designers Gremlin have provided a system that works well. Although you can move with the mouse in the 3-D environment, forget it; it's too tricky. Move with the arrow keys like you're accustomed to from countless other 3-D games, and use the mouse for other functions and clicking on objects. It will take about an hour to be able to fluidly handle the game's interface, but after you master it, you'll get lost in the plot and action.

The game's skeletal warriors want your bones.

The monsters in *Realms* are as challenging as the puzzles. Make no mistake about it—this is a difficult game. The satisfaction of killing a tough beast or accessing a hidden area will keep you interested in uncovering more of the story. The photorealistic graphics are extraordinarily crisp, especially when you realize that you're experiencing the settings as if you were really in them. Definitely turn down the lights for the best effect. There are numerous video clips throughout, but they're not overused as in a few games by other designers; they punctuate the action and adventure with drama and terror.

The sound FX are just as chilling as the sights you encounter, though some of the voiceover work is pretty annoying and campy. Nonetheless, *Realms* will definitely scare you and make you jump at various points; Gremlin has found the right blend of surprise to achieve this difficult objective. *Realms* is that perfect kind of home entertainment that I drool over here in the HorrorCode; hopefully, my drool won't attract an otherworldly beast in *this* Earthly realm.

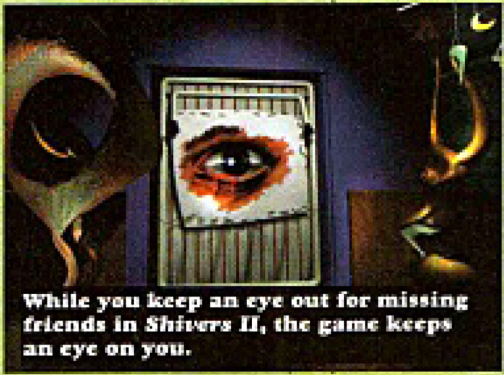
Don't be gored by *Realms*' bull-like marauder!

HORRORCADE

Shivers and Crypts

By RUSS CECCOLA

Lately, you may have noticed that HorrorCade has made more frequent appearances in Fango. As I sensed a couple of years ago, horror themes in games have become more prevalent, just as they have in the movie and TV worlds. The success of properties such as *Tales from the Crypt*, *Goosebumps* and *The X Files* has significantly increased the public's interest in the weird and bizarre, and game companies have been responding with titles that have a twisted bent to them. *The 7th Guest* and *Doom* made spooky and horrific things acceptable in gaming a few years ago, and since then, the onslaught has been neverending, with the best yet to come. With digital imagery so prevalent in genre films, it's only appropriate that so much frightening fun can be had on computers themselves. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)



While you keep an eye out for missing friends in *Shivers II*, the game keeps an eye on you.

Shivers II: Harvest of Souls
Sierra On-Line
IBM and Mac PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Shivers was a runaway hit for Sierra just after *Phantasmagoria* had convinced the company that horror was a profitable genre to explore. *Shivers II: Harvest of Souls* updates the interface from the first game, but provides the same variety of difficult puzzles and spooky scenery. This series aims for the teenage crowd, but that doesn't mean that adults won't enjoy it, though it does mean that older players will likely shake their heads at some of the corny dialogue or teenage conventions. The *Shivers* games work best for an older *Goosebumps* crowd that has the capacity to solve the occasionally trying puzzles.

In *Shivers II*, you have to travel to the abandoned town of Cyclone, Arizona, to search for missing friends. Cyclone resembles something out of a nightmare, but you'll have to jump in feet first if you want to make it out alive. The updated look includes 360-degree panning in the game scenes and a higher level of interactivity. *Shivers II* also encourages socialization with other players in an Internet chat feature, but I didn't really see a need for it. Postings on computer bulletin boards or in newsgroups serve the same function if you get stuck. Like Sierra's *King's Quest* and *Leisure Suit Larry* games, *Shivers* should stick around for a while. Puzzles in this kind of game are always enjoyable, especially when they're the focus and shrouded in a scary environment.

Apparitions like this one will give you more *Shivers*.

Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh
Interplay
IBM and Mac PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Malcolm McDowell is best known in the gaming world for his starring stints in the two latest *Wing Commander* titles, but he also toplines in this unusual release from Interplay. His role as Stuart Davenport can be added to the list of his not-so-nice characters; the game's main focus, though, is Egypt and all things Egyptian, including vengeful mummies. *Mummy* is not an adaptation of any film, but instead an adventure game in which you have to do some "digging" and puzzle-solving to prevent the bad guys from stealing priceless treasures. Of course, there are always spirits around to help you against your enemies. *Mummy* duplicates the feel and presentation of Interplay's other classic horror story, *Frankenstein*, which starred Tim Curry as the tormented doctor, but it clearly appeals more to adventure and Indiana Jones fans with its tombs, conflicts and artifacts. Go get your shovel!

Hunter Hunted
Sierra On-Line
IBM and Mac PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Hunter Hunted was an unexpected delight; I'm so sick of fighting games that I thought this might be just another title in that genre when I first checked it out. Boy, was I wrong. This game is uncharacteristic of Sierra, but quite representative of the new k.a.a. division it has set up to handle such titles. You can choose to be a man or a beast in a side-scrolling game that will leave your hands tired from all the action. This entry calls to mind arcade favorites like the *Double Dragon* games and the *Prince of Persia* computer titles, but its 3-D FX and both left-and-right and in-and-out movements establish it as something new. Two players can try it out on a split screen, too. The sound and graphics are top-notch, but it's the game play that will hook you.

Egyptian adventure fans will dig *Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh*.

HORRORCADE

Face Your "Tomb"

By RUSS CECCOLA

The *Alien* and *Terminator* film series firmly established that women could cope with monsters and machines in action films just as well as men. Unfortunately, the electronic entertainment industry has more often than not consigned women to smaller roles, usually as love interests or damsels to be rescued. And although there have been various attempts at female leads in the past, no video or computer game has successfully beaten down the stereotypes like the protagonist of this month's HorrorCade entry, *Tomb Raider*. In it, a beautiful and brawny gal named Lara is your conduit to action and adventure. Although Lara's got the looks, her firearms are even more striking. Expect to see more of this heroine's exploits based on the tremendous response to this title. There may actually be hope for women to go deeper into gaming than *Tetris*. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Tomb Raider
Eidos
IBM PCs and compatibles, PlayStation and Saturn

Fright: ☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠☠

Lara Croft was born an aristocrat, but can't stand the stuffiness of it all. Disowned by her wealthy and powerful family, she sets off on her own adventures. You take the buxom brunette through many game levels and a variety of environments in her search for an artifact that will grant her incredible powers. *Tomb Raider* presents Lara's quest through areas that would seem right at home in an Indiana Jones film; in fact, she would make quite the match for our favorite fedora wearer. I doubt she's afraid of snakes.

Point, aim, blow 'em away! *Tomb Raider*'s Lara Croft is no ordinary video-game heroine.

Tomb Raider is a first-person-perspective action-adventure with the look of *Quake* or *Resident Evil*, combined with the play action of *Prince of Persia* and other 3-D titles. You move Lara around the game's chambers and ruins with simple controls, but tricky moves like jumping, climbing and creeping along narrow ledges will require a bit more finesse. The primary focus is the exploration of areas as diverse as the Pyramids and Roman ruins in Lara's search for the artifact. Combat enters into the mix more than you might expect, and although the encounters are not as frequent as those in *Duke Nukem 3D* or *Quake*, beasts such as bears and dinosaurs do keep Lara busy. Most players will take a level or two to get used to the heroine's movements, but these aren't the most challenging areas anyway, so the breathing room won't affect your success.

Tomb Raider's environments are interactive, so Lara may have to move blocks and other elements to reach new areas or solve puzzles. You have to think as much as you have to react, so expect to spend some time with this game—and during most of that period, your jaw will hit the ground as you check out the incredible graphics. Although Lara is made up of 3-D polygons, the backgrounds and chambers look so real that long hours spent with the game can become scary or claustrophobic. For the best experience, get yourself a 3-D video card and loud speakers. Lara can go underwater as well as make incredible jumps, so she covers the gamut of action-movie posturing; still, *Tomb Raider* is anything but common, and makes gaming that much more accessible to a whole new target audience sick of cutesy programs and captured princesses.

HORRORCADE

"BLOOD" on Your Screen

Guns may be more efficient, but who can resist such esoteric weapons as Blood's voodoo dolls?

By RUSS CECCOLA

Well over a year ago, I mentioned that Clive Barker was working on a game with Virgin Interactive Entertainment. At a recent book signing, I asked Barker about this project and CD-ROMs in general. Nothing ever happened with his game beyond initial designs, since Virgin eliminated a number of titles in a sort of fat-trimming process that included "the more hardcore titles like mine," he explained.

After that, Barker got busy with other projects and doesn't find any of the current crop of games "all that exciting anyway. It would take something really unique to get me interested in a game again. It's not the money, either. I'm constantly involved with films and books, and simply don't have time for anything else unless it really grabs me and compels me to get involved."

Well, it's a shame that Barker feels that way, but don't give up hope; the right project could hook him. After all, somebody must have sold him on card games for the *Imajica* title to happen. I've got a suggestion: How about a CD-ROM version of Barker's *A-Z of Horror* book, but with video clips, animations and some original artwork to replace and augment the stills and text? It's not that far astray from his current work, and he's already done all the research to produce the book and BBC TV show. Hmmm...Somebody call Clive! Until that happens, here are three more games to check out, the first of which might just be both bloody and exciting enough for Fango's favorite Liverpudlian. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Blood
Monolith Productions/ GT Interactive
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

I don't know why it took so long for a game to have this title, but this offering from Monolith Productions, produced and distributed by GT Interactive, certainly earns the name. From the moment you see the box, with the bloody handprint on the cover, to the time you turn off the computer after a round of play, you'll feel as if you've jumped inside a chum bucket—there's really that much gore spread around.

You play a guy who has a bone to pick with an evil cult, and when you decide to invade their temple, it's only natural that all the forces of hell try to stop you. You battle gargoyles, zombies, cult members, spiders and hellhounds as you try to get to the major bad guy and decimate the cult, piece by gory piece. *Blood* represents an advancement on the game engine used in the *Duke Nukem 3D* line, with bleeding walls, see-through water and other details that you might expect in something like *Quake*. Grue and heads fly as you use the game's weapons, but the best death scenes occur when you turn a flamethrower on an enemy and the burning body continues to run around. The interactivity with both the environment and body parts allows you to be creative, so you should revel in the mayhem and see how high you can get the arterial spray to pump.

Duke Nukem 3D Plutonium Pak
3D Realms/GT Interactive
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Duke Nukem 3D fans will want this official add-on product, which offers an exciting new mission containing 11 levels, adds two new monsters and one weapon and enhances the multiplayer mode so that you can take on computer-controlled enemies if your buddies are unavailable for a Dukematch round. The new levels are most entertaining, poking fun at hit movies such as *Mission: Impossible* and *Independence Day*, and increase the camp factor with new Duke sayings and scenery. The Alien Queen and Protector Drone creatures are particularly nasty, but Duke's new microwave weapon will help with its superheating abilities to literally fry the monsters. Bonus *Duke Nukem 3D* features like screen savers and jigsaw puzzles help make the *Plutonium Pak* one of the best add-on products ever for a 3-D action game.

Duke Nukem 3D Atomic Edition
3D Realms/GT Interactive
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

OK, so you've never seen *Duke Nukem 3D* and you want to give the blond muscleman's adventures a try. Well, you could go out to the store and pick up *Duke Nukem 3D* for starters. Then you could add the *Plutonium Pak* reviewed above. Well, don't bother: You should just go get the new *Atomic Edition*, which couples the original title and the *Plutonium Pak* in one of those weird shiny boxes that looks like it *is* radioactive. This is the ultimate *Duke Nukem 3D* product until the new games come out, and should keep newbies busy for a while—and convince them to join the Duke Nukem fan club.

Keep an eye (or three) out for new Duke Nukem products.

HORRORCADE

"TUROK" AND ROLL

By RUSS CECCOLA

The Nintendo 64 was the biggest gift of the Christmas 1996 shopping season, but until now, the system didn't provide much for me to cover. Sure, *Doom 64* came out, but it was yet another version of *Doom* on a newer platform. The real winner for the 64-bit system besides the earliest games (*Super Mario 64* and *PilotWings 64*) is *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*. That's the focus of this HorrorCade edition, along with a collection that you've just got to buy because of its thoroughness and neat bonus items. That said, let's move on to gunning for dinos. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
Acclaim
Nintendo 64

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

I was hooked on *Turok* from the moment I started. It takes first-person-perspective gaming to the next level of detail and excitement. Everything in the game is rendered in 3-D, so the movements and animations are as realistic as possible and the immense worlds/levels will each keep you busy for days. You control the titular character, a man whose whole meaning in life is keeping the elements of the Lost Land from invading his world. Unfortunately, someone called the Campaigner is trying to destroy the fabric of time, so Turok can forget the normal enemies and concentrate instead on the Campaigner's forces, ranging from evil humans to, of course, dinosaurs.

Turok is based on Acclaim Comics' recent series that continues the 40-year-old adventures of Turok. This character stands the test of time, despite the setting of the game and comic in a place right out of a *Conan* book. The game controls are rather flexible, with the analog controller used for looking around and the directional pad used for movement. After a few minutes, you'll be used to the interface and ready for action in the immersive environments.

Turok is very bloody and violent, but what would you expect from a game with the word "Hunter" in the title? Enemies die in multiple ways, depending on the weapon you use (bow and arrow, knife, shotgun, etc.), and leave their bloodstains in the game environment. *Turok* is also fast-paced, so you'll need your finest skills from other 3-D games in this one. Unfortunately, you'll also need a memory card to save your game, but you're likely to want one immediately because you'll be dying to continue on to the higher levels after your first few plays. *Turok* is really the best of the first batch of Nintendo 64 titles. With cartridges like these, who needs CD-ROM drives for a video-game system after all? Nintendo has proved that the old methods of cartridge-based play still work, and Acclaim has taken the ball and run deep into the Lost Land with it.

Roam prehistoric scenes with *Turok*.

Open the *id Anthology*—if you dare.

id Anthology
id Software/GT Interactive
IBM PCs and compatibles, Mac

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Much in the way the Miller brothers changed the adventure game genre with *Myst*, id Software firmly established the 3-D action game with their titles, going back to their earliest hit, *Wolfenstein 3D*. When I first played that game, I knew it was something special, lack of elevation and interesting enemies notwithstanding. It was the feel of the game that was the attraction, the joy of simply running around an environment blowing away foes with reckless abandon. That game play transferred to all of id's subsequent products, from *Doom* to *Quake*, and made each release of theirs a bigger hit than the previous one.

id Anthology collects the company's best games in one box, packed with goodies that most of their fans will want. The games come on four CD-ROMs; the first contains their earliest titles, which paved the way for *Doom* and *Quake*—everything from *Hover Tank 3D* and *Wolfenstein 3D* to the complete *Commander Keen* series. The second CD-ROM contains all of the versions of *Doom* and *Doom II*. The third CD-ROM is a full version of *Quake*. For you Mac players, the fourth CD-ROM collects Mac versions of *Ultimate Doom, Doom II, Final Doom* and *Wolfenstein 3D*.

The games alone are enough to keep you busy for weeks, but the designers of this collection have gone even further. A few of the bonus items in the package are cheesy—I could do without the id dogtags or phone card—but the *Doom* comic book and pewter cyberdemon are cool. The collection prize is *the book of id*—a complete history of the company, with lots of photos and personal recollections from the folks at id. In their heyday, they were unstoppable; now that the company has essentially split, with the principals going their separate ways, the magic might be gone, but this collection stands as a permanent testament.

HORRORCADE

"Harvester" of Horrors

By RUSS CECCOLA

If you're a loyal reader of HorrorCade, you know that I talked about *Harvester* long ago. In fact, I reviewed the product based on a Beta version that was supposed to be turned into the final product by the time my column saw print. Well, as you know, things sometimes happen that are beyond control. *Harvester's* ship date slipped, and with every month it went unreleased, the creators tweaked it and added new elements until it evolved into something even more exciting and disgusting than it had been before. Fortunately, I've decided not to rely on Betas anymore, and now that I can actually hold a boxed copy of *Harvester* in my hands, it's time to take a much more in-depth look at it. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Harvester
Merit Software
IBM PCs and compatibles

Fright:
Gore:
Fun:
Graphics:
Sound:

Think you've seen it all? Think you're jaded and just can't be disturbed anymore? Think again. I guarantee that you'll find at least a few of the scenes in *Harvester* offensive, if not downright repugnant, and that you'll get an overall icky feeling from playing it.

Talk about goo-goo eyes!

After months in development, *Harvester* arrives with plenty of impact.

Rather than skate around the issue of violence, *Harvester's* designer and artists jumped feet first into a swirling eddy of goo and blood. You'll actually have to perform much of the violence yourself in this game, but it's all in the pursuit of a good cause.

In *Harvester*, you control a character named Steve, a newcomer to a town called Harvest. He really should make a hasty exit from the place, as it's a cross between *Twin Peaks* and *The Stepford Wives*. A lodge of the Order of the Harvest Moon stands ominously outside the town; this is where all paths lead and the final parts of the game take place, but a great deal of investigation and puzzle-solving come first. Ultimately, Steve has to save his girlfriend Stephanie, who has been taken hostage in the lodge.

Harvester combines two types of play—adventure and arcade combat—that work well together in the context of the game, since you have to investigate clues and fend off monsters to survive long enough to save Stephanie. An overhead view of Harvest acts as your access to various locations, but the majority of the game action takes place as a side view of Steve in various locations. Most of the puzzles involve some kind of object manipulation or the correct use of items, so you shouldn't get stuck and kept from the blood and gore for too long. Steve can talk to various characters via conversation trees, but don't get frustrated with their responses, since they'll change as you perform other actions.

Although *Harvester's* adventure aspects are rather ordinary and commonplace for fans of the genre and really offer nothing new, the addition of combat makes the game more exciting. You can use 21 different weapons on the various monsters and human opponents in fast combat sequences. The assortment of weapons includes everything from your fists and a knife to a pitchfork and chainsaw. They all cause varying bits of gore to fly off your attackers, so you'll have a visual impression of how much damage you've done. Combat opens the doors to further exploration and vice versa, so the two play styles work better than if *Harvester* was only a straight adventure game.

People will react to *Harvester* in a variety of ways, mostly depending on their tolerance for violence and ability to master the combat scenes. I doubt that Fango readers will have a problem with either. The acting from the large cast is intentionally campy, so don't fault the delivery of lines and missed cues. The blood and gore are over-the-top and intense, so this game is definitely not for the squeamish.

Harvester pits you, as the heroic Steve, against various household pests.

After the months of hype and slipped shipping dates, was *Harvester* worth the wait? Absolutely. The game has been banned in various countries and store chains, which should give you some indication of what to expect. I do have one question, though: What do they do for an encore?

HORRORCADE

PC Clones

By RUSS CECCOLA

Most sequels out of Hollywood don't ever reach the level of success of the original films, but the game industry works in quite the opposite way. When a game is hot, a sequel to or reworking of the title usually sells well based on the name alone. *Doom* led to the hit *Doom II*, while *Myst* spawned *Riven*. This month, I'm covering three titles that are new editions of past hits.

Hexen II is a wonderful follow-up to the game that redefined the one-level-after-another mentality of 3-D action games. *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* derives its plot loosely from the Spielberg hit and revisits the *Jurassic Park* game arena. Finally, *Resident Evil Director's Cut* adds even more neat elements and graphics to a title that remains one of my favorites ever. Now, let's go visit some demons... (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

id/Activision's sequel showcases plenty of *Hexen* violence.

Hexen II
id Software/Activision
IBM PCs & compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Hexen: Beyond Heretic changed the focus of 3-D action games by linking all of the levels together into a real story, moving beyond the standard of the time in which your goal was simply to kill enemies, find the exit and go to the next level. This different take on action games was established by Raven Software; *Hexen II* continues this approach, but adds so much more.

Hexen II uses the *Quake* engine to deliver its graphics, creating a frightening and realistic environment in which rain, weather and details as subtle as leaves make you feel like you're right in the game's corridors. You can choose to play one of four characters: Necromancer, Assassin, Crusader or Paladin. Each has special skills, magic abilities and weapons, so the four roles provide different challenges. The creative monsters spread out over the four environments (medieval, Egyptian, Roman and Meso-American) will keep you running; they include dive-bombing imps, scorpions, mummies, spiders and Medusae. The boss monsters are even badder, like the four Riders of the Apocalypse. *Hexen II* is quite an involved game and acts as a challenging diversion until *Quake II* and *Tomb Raider II* hit the shelves.

Most people would be happy to stay out of this *Lost World* battle.

The Lost World: Jurassic Park
DreamWorks Interactive/Electronic Arts
PlayStation

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Just as the film of the same name took dinosaurs to a new level, this game advances both the technology and play action from the earlier *Jurassic* series. You control one of five characters (a "compy" dinosaur, T. rex, raptor, human scientist or human hunter) in over 30 levels of fast action. This ain't no safari; it's more like a war. Although the game was developed before the movie, it captures the film's spirit nicely. The dinosaurs have only mayhem on their tiny minds, while the humans opt for survival, and playing both offers a few new vicarious thrills. The characters and environments use 3-D graphics and techniques, but the game utilizes 2-D side-scrolling platform action. That's not to fault the production; just don't expect an adventure game. *The Lost World* plays a lot like Sega's *Jurassic Park* titles, and will keep your hands moving as fast as a bunch of people running from raptors.

Resident Evil Director's Cut
Capcom
PlayStation

Fright: ☠☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠☠

If I could go higher than five skulls per category, it would be for this new version of the game that already maxed out my ratings. *Resident Evil* was a huge hit due to its all-out action, blood and gore, challenging game play, scares and monsters. (Maybe it also had something to do with the cover art, which features a guy who looks an awful lot like Bruce Campbell.) There's no space to get into detail here, but the major new elements that make this game a must-buy include its unrestrained, gory visuals, new camera angles and music, different enemies in different locations, rearranged puzzles and items, three levels, a new monster and an interactive preview of *Resident Evil 2*. Quite simply, this game bleeds Fango mentality all the way.

Enjoy the *Resident Evil Director's Cut*...and shoot...and slash...

HORRORCADE

Prime "Evil"

By RUSS CECCOLA

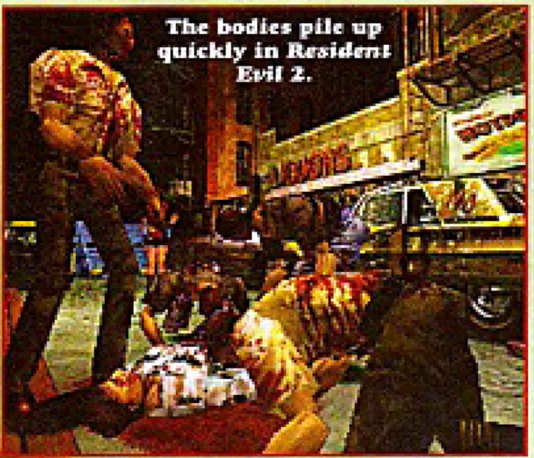
Crack open the bubbly! This column marks my 30th installment of HorrorCade, and it's time to celebrate. Boy, did that go by fast! About 40 issues ago, I would have loved to have just one article in here; now I'm a seasoned veteran, if not quite as seasoned as old Doc Cyclops. So it's appropriate that one title I'm reviewing popped up around the 15th anniversary of its source material. *Blade Runner* is one of those special movies that only get made once, and Westwood has captured the essence of the film in their latest offering. While we're on the subject of big releases, Capcom unveiled *Resident Evil 2* just in time for this drooling writer to pop the disc into his PlayStation and get blown away by another entry in this landmark series. (See the facing page for a story on George Romero's involvement with the project.)

Many of you have found me on line in various ways and written in about the column and games in general. I'm always accessible at RCCola666@aol.com, so please let me know your thoughts on HorrorCade. Here's to another 30! [Ratings are from one to five skulls.]

Resident Evil 2
Capcom
PlayStation

Fright: ☠☠☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠☠

Horror movies, books and TV shows are on the rise these days. Quite simply, people love monsters and love to be scared. They also love sequels. Thus, *Resident Evil 2* (*RE 2*) couldn't have come at a more perfect time. After examining *Resident Evil Director's Cut*, I was in the mood for some more zombie-killing. *RE 2* feels like a much more intense game from the start; no longer are you confined to one location, but you have a whole virtual city to explore and destroy as you try to eliminate all the creatures. You control Leon or Claire, new characters in the *Resident Evil* universe, as their personal agendas become involved in the story. Quite simply, you have to discover why Raccoon City has been overrun by zombies and keep yourself alive along the way.


The bodies pile up quickly in *Resident Evil 2*.

RE 2 has all of the blood and guts you'd expect, but several of the killings and non-interactive scenes go far beyond the over-the-top violence for which this series has been known. A new menuing system makes it easier to examine items and select weapons, so you can totally lose yourself in the environment and try to stay alert. Regardless of your careful movements, you'll still jump out of your seat many times and find yourself at a disadvantage. From zombies to bloodshed, *RE 2* continues to both entertain and shock, and I hope that we'll see another *Resident Evil* game every year that continues to push the envelope. *RE 2* does just that, and I know Capcom can keep 'em coming.

Blade Runner
Westwood Studios/Virgin Interactive Entertainment
IBM PCs and compatibles and Mac

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠☠

Blade Runner wowed people with its incredible visuals and gritty take on the future. Plus, you got Rutger Hauer! In the capable hands of the hitmakers at Westwood Studios, *Blade Runner* avoids the simple action-adventure approach that would have been an easy translation of the license and instead shapes up as a work of art. You'll need a computer with great graphics power to handle this baby, since *Blade Runner* doesn't skimp on the visuals or game play. You control Ray McCoy, a rookie Blade Runner who has to investigate a possible connection between replicants and a recent animal murder. You have all the tools of the trade at your fingertips, including replicant detection devices and a KIA (knowledge integration assistant)—a means for tracking clues—but the best part of the experience is how easily you get sucked into the 3-D game world.

The dimensional effects and visuals are stunning. To gather information about the killing, you have to do a lot of legwork and interrogation, but you'll enjoy the game's pace and the secrets you uncover. How you react to replicants affects the outcome, and other random elements make this one replayable. Although the characters are 3-D rendered rather than video-captured, Westwood hired original *Blade Runner* stars Sean Young and Brion James for voiceover work. The overall environment also strongly recalls the film, and the game boasts a specially edited version of the classic Vangelis soundtrack. Westwood drew on the talents of almost everyone at their studios for this winner, and it has all meshed wonderfully to bring this tour of 2019 Los Angeles to your PCs and Macs.

Travel into the dark future of *Blade Runner*.

HORRORCADE

QUAKE AND RAID

By RUSS CECCOLA

In last month's column, I covered *Resident Evil 2*, a more than worthy follow-up title to the best-selling PlayStation game. Lately, many other follow-ups have caught my attention, and all have surpassed their predecessors in many ways. Both *Quake II* and *Tomb Raider II* have taken what was great about the originals and exploded them in all directions.

I wasn't a very big fan of *Quake* because of the goofy-looking enemies and quirky polygon graphics, but I saw the potential in its engine, and *Quake II* uses its power to deliver a standout game. And who could not like Lara Croft of the *Tomb Raider* titles? She's bad, beautiful and adventurous. *Tomb Raider II* offers more vehicles, villains and weapons for Lara to play with, so get your trigger fingers ready. Oh, one more thing: You may see Lara come to life on the big screen soon. She has already made the transition to a comic book, so a live-action Lara may not be far behind. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Quake II
id Software/Activision
IBM PCs and compatibles and Mac

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

id Software is legendary in the game industry for the *Doom* series, which laid the groundwork for *Quake*. Although all of the company's initial members have gone their separate ways, id continues to produce games with next-generation design teams. *Quake II*

There's a whole lot more *Quake*-ing goin' on.

makes a good attempt at a storyline, unlike most first-person-perspective games, and offers a new batch of baddies to eliminate in any number of ways.

This sequel's real strengths include the 3-D graphic detail, the more balanced weapons, better multiplayer situations and stunning sound FX. All of these elements surpass *Quake's*. Since the first game, 3-D graphics technology has taken off as a whole design area unto itself; *Quake II* shines brightest on a system equipped with a 3Dfx-compatible video board, but it supports most other 3-D systems as well, and the views are stunning. In the past, you could waltz through similar games with the most destructive artillery; here, the powerful weapons, including new ones like the rail gun, really pack a punch, but may also slow you down and require charging time. *Quake II's* terrain is perfect for multiplayer death matches with its shadowy corners and craggy surfaces, so you should have no trouble surprising your buddies in tournaments. Finally, *Quake II* is a real treat for the ears. Although it doesn't go all the way to incorporate 3-D sound, you'll still get a blast if you turn your speakers all the way up.

Quake II is exactly what *Quake* should have been. Although *Quake* has lost its mythical stature over the past two years, this sequel should propel the series name back to prominence.

Tomb Raider II
Eidos
IBM PCs and compatibles, Mac, PlayStation and Saturn

Fright: ☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Lara Croft had a great deal of talent and moves in *Tomb Raider*, but she really comes of age in *Tomb Raider II*, much as Linda Hamilton upped the heroism ante in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. From new weapons and moves to cool vehicles and much better environments, this installment gives Lara fans plenty to drool over. Her ultimate prize is the Dagger of Xian, but her journeys take her to Venice, the mountains of Tibet, the Great Wall of China and a sunken ship. These locations allow for much more variety than the earlier game's tombs and temples.

Lara does a great deal of climbing in *Tomb Raider II*, and the new skill comes in handy in more than a few situations. While the game still includes puzzles that require you to find your way into a room or area, you'll also have to fix machinery and solve other practical dilemmas. The latest weapons such as the grenade launcher and M-16 are a ton of fun to unleash on the enemies, though I especially enjoy the spear gun for eliminating pesky sharks. And while it's cool to run around the game levels, the snowmobile and speedboat are exhilarating to control. There's just something about firing a snowmobile over a hill…

Tomb Raider II is an extremely impressive sequel that started out as an add-on disc, so it doesn't stray too far from the original, but still offers enough new elements and levels to make the game play exciting. Indiana Jane, indeed!

Watch Lara Croft's back for her as you venture into the latest *Tomb Raider* game.

HORRORCADE

A Toast to "Hellfire"

By RUSS CECCOLA

Lately, I've been receiving a number of e-mails and Instant Messages (chat windows) on AOL from HorrorCade readers. I've met some really cool people who all hunger for games and horror films. If you have any requests or comments, let me know (my E-mail address is RCCola666@aol.com). A special hello goes out to Mike, who was one of the winners of the *Shining* contest and stayed in the Overlook Hotel.

This month's HorrorCade revisits one of my favorite games from the last year or so, *Diablo*. Sierra On-Line released an expansion package that offers so much more than such packs typically do. I'm also covering *Nightmare Creatures*, a fun and interesting game hybrid from Activision. Keep those letters and messages coming! (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Hellfire
Sierra On-Line, Inc.
IBM PCs & compatibles

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠☠

Diablo was one of the most popular computer games of 1997 and a personal favorite, so imagine my delight when I received *Hellfire* in the mail. It's an official expansion pack for *Diablo*, but truly enhances the game to the point where it feels like a sequel, or even a whole new title. *Diablo* is an overhead adventure in which you move your character through the depths of hellish dungeons to fight creatures and find treasure. The main focus of *Hellfire* is a single-player mission in which you take on Na-Krul, once the servant of Diablo, who wants to take over as head evil guy. That alone would be worth the price of admission, but there's more.

I hate to list game elements to let you know what to expect, but *Hellfire*'s bonuses can really only be told through the numbers. There are 30 additional items in the add-on pack and seven new spells. One of these sets up a wall of lightning, so you know what kind of damage you can do with it. They didn't add just a monster or two to *Hellfire*, but 29 new enemies for you to challenge in your quest. They're ugly, vicious brutes, too. Finally, you have a whole new character to use in your journeys: the monk, who's great with a staff in combat and has other skills that might lead you to choose him.

Hellfire impressed me with its ascendancy above typical expansion packs and, in fact, reminded me of the *Ultima VII* packages that offered almost entirely new games for a lower price. If you loved *Diablo*, raise *Hellfire*!

Nightmare Creatures
Activision
IBM PCs & compatibles and PlayStation

Fright: ☠☠☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Tomb Raider was such a huge success that you'd expect to see similar game play from other companies. Much like the *Doom* clones that came out in the wake of that game's success which used the same perspective, you'll see many titles that mimic *Tomb Raider*, mostly because of their expansive 3-D environments and third-person perspective. Well, Activision was smarter than that. *Nightmare Creatures* has a similar look and feel, but creates its own identity in its game play. You control one of two characters in search of a guy named Crowley, who has unleashed evil on London. Instead of typical 3-D game action, you have to battle each monster separately—as in a fighting game—as you move through the locations on the heels of your nemesis. The special FX are incredible and the atmosphere is very spooky, so you'll love soaking up the chilly London air as you fight all the werewolves, zombies and demons.

Hellfire gives you a computer-game experience with a sting in its tail.

Diablo fans will find plenty of fresh foes to bedevil them in the new expansion pack.

If you love fighting monsters, you'll get a kick out of *Nightmare Creatures*.

The "Postal" Zone

By RUSS CECCOLA

This mutant packs plenty of hardware.

As I'm writing this, I'm about to attend the major annual gaming trade show, E3 (Electronic Entertainment Expo), in Atlanta. I look forward to all of the titles I'll see for the first time, from sports to action games, but my ears always perk up when I hear words like "blood" or "horror." Then I know I might have a title for HorrorCade.

The phrase "going postal" has taken on great significance recently due to the number of U.S. postal workers who have gone on violent rampages. I was a mailman for about six months in college to earn extra money, but I never went postal; still, I had a number of intolerable customers on my routes ("Where's my damn Social Security check?" was a familiar phrase), as well as many incompetent people and bureaucratic hassles at the office, so it's no wonder some workers go over the edge. *Postal* came out amidst great controversy because of its title and level of violence, so it's only appropriate that I cover it here. (Ratings are from one to five skulls.)

Postal
Ripcord Games
IBM PCs & compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠☠☠☠☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Postal goes right for the gut with its gruesome and disturbing acts of violence, which might be way too much for normal gamers, but should be just right for Fango readers. Even so, you may find yourself hesitant as you're about to blow away a woman or child. In other shooters, you're normally out to eliminate aliens, monsters or other bad guys, but *Postal* is nothing like that. Your character is simply named Postal Dude, and you have to satisfy his paranoia by blowing away everyone in sight, from true armed hostiles to innocent bystanders. You control Postal Dude from an overhead perspective, which makes it a bit more realistic because you're rampaging through neighborhoods and can view all of the action as you would from an aerial shot on the news. The plot's sketchy and the game play is repetitive, but the outrageous blood and violence will no doubt make up for those points for many players.

Other games have had graphic gore, but *Postal* stands apart in its presentation and complete disregard for human life. In some ways, it's completely disturbing, but in others, it's very cathartic. While playing, I just imagine that these potential victims are the ones who wouldn't shut up in a movie theater or produced a credit card on a cash-only supermarket line, and then I'm OK with the violence. You eventually have an arsenal of weapons at your disposal, but the effects are the same: blood spurts all over the place and victims drop in dramatic death spirals. The voice FX compound the nastiness: Victims beg for mercy, and Postal Dude replies with wisecracks. *Postal* won't help the case of violence in games, and it's not a must-have title for its gaming aspects, which are rather simplistic and unoriginal. But gorehounds will get their fill.

Goosebumps: Attack of the Mutant
DreamWorks Interactive
IBM PCs & compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠
Fun: ☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠
Sound: ☠☠

I've been known to pick up an occasional *Goosebumps* novel because they're easy reads and manage to present horror in a cool, funny and kinda campy way. Well, that description equally applies to *Attack of the Mutant*. It's not a terribly complicated or extensive game, but it will amuse the kids for a while and adults a little less. The game uses cartoon graphics to present a story in which the Masked Mutant and his henchmen want to turn the world into a comic book. The adventure has puzzles and traps to accompany the exploration, but you won't have too much trouble with it. I was surprised to find that the graphics are mediocre for a current game, especially considering DreamWorks' reputation; you'll encounter a lot of pixelation as you move close to characters and objects in the 3-D world. *Attack of the Mutant* is at the other end of the spectrum from *Postal*, but for the right child or bored adult, it might keep the mind occupied for a few hours.

Watch out; *Goosebumps: Attack of the Mutant* might leave a frog at your throat.

Chaos Island: The Lost World
DreamWorks Interactive
IBM PCs & compatibles

Fright: ☠
Gore: ☠
Fun: ☠☠☠
Graphics: ☠☠☠
Sound: ☠☠☠

Chaos Island is the most unusual *Jurassic Park/The Lost World* tie-in game, since it's aimed at children and devoid of much of the action and violence of other dino games. You control a group of scientists and good dinosaurs as they outwit hunters and bad dinos, much like in the *Lost World* film. *Chaos Island* is a real-time strategy game, so fast fingers aren't as important as a creative mind. The graphics are nice and the sounds include voice-overs from the film's stars, but the game is just too easy to get through and too limited in scope. The hard difficulty setting will challenge adults, but may be too tough for its intended audience. The unusual, but familiar, game play kept me interested for one pass through the 12 missions, but repeat play is questionable. *Chaos Island* does have a neat new format for dinosaurs in contrast to the preceding *Jurassic* platform games, but we might have to wait for the next Michael Crichton dino story for this format to reach fruition.